An integrated, thematic, literature-based unit for middle school

Lisa Marie Waner

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AN INTEGRATED, THEMATIC, LITERATURE-BASED UNIT
FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State university,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Secondary with English Option

by
Lisa Marie Waner
June 1994
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Approved by:

Mary F. Andis, First Reader

Harry Hellenbrand, Second Reader
ABSTRACT

This project is a curriculum guide to Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, that will challenge eighth-grade students to think about their world and ways to make it a better place for themselves and others. The curriculum will be integrated with social studies and the language arts processes of thinking, listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Students will look at historical issues and explore thematic strands of prejudice and survival. They will also learn about the structure of a novel, as well as the literary devices used by the author as these issues fall from the literature during the reading.

The unit is divided into the three stages of Into, Through, and Beyond, which are divided into sections. The first two sections, the Into stage, include an introduction to the novel, and some historical background on the setting. The next three sections, the Through stage, include a chronological lesson plan, and discussion of literary devices and elements of a novel. The last two sections, the Beyond stage, include a study of the two themes of prejudice and survival, and a culminating project.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry is a powerful novel and motivates students to think about the relevant and meaningful issues of prejudice and survival and how these issues apply to their own lives today.
I would like to thank my husband Scott, for all his patience and encouragement during the writing of this project and for teaching my son not to turn off the computer while I was typing. His confidence in my abilities was invaluable throughout the entire process. The rest of my family was also full of constant encouragement. I could not have finished the project without their support.

I thank Dr. Mary Andis, the first reader on this project, for taking me by the hand and leading me through so much unfamiliar territory. I would have been lost without her guidance. Her patience with my struggles and her undivided attention were paramount to my success.

I also thank Dr. Harry Hellenbrand, the second reader on this project, for his insightful comments and suggestions that helped me to pull this unit together in a cohesive and organized manner.
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As an eighth grade teacher, I have come to recognize and observe the unique instructional and curricular needs of eighth-graders. To keep the students involved, it is almost necessary to be as entertaining and fast-paced as the media. And this involvement needs to lead to the students learning to think beyond their own immediate surroundings.

I have taught eighth-grade Language Arts for six years, and our English program is divided into two sections, each being taught in a separate fifty-minute period. One class is titled Language Arts and focuses on increasing students' skills in the mechanics of writing and their knowledge of grammar. The other class, Literature, focuses on developing an awareness and appreciation of classic and current literature works.

*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, a novel by Mildred Taylor (1976), is frequently read aloud to the students and the English department is hoping to order a class set in the near future. Currently, there is no curriculum guide available, which leads to the problem of lack of structured guidance for the teacher who desires to use various strategies and materials to make this novel relevant and meaningful to the students. This current need is the motivation behind this project.

There has also been a movement toward the integration of the language arts processes and skills with literature as the
focal point of instruction. This project is designed to address language skills as they appear in the novel and gives specific examples from the text to illustrate the use of these skills in classic literature. The activities that accompany the novel focus on the integration of the language processes and use the novel as the focal point.

The Importance of Directly Teaching Literature

The novel by Mildred Taylor (1976), *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, winner of the Newbery Medal for outstanding children's literature in 1977 (see Appendix A), lends itself to meeting the needs of eighth-grade students. It introduces ideas and concepts that are pertinent to issues in today's society as well as the lives of middle-school students. The main characters in the novel are teenagers dealing with family strife, societal injustices, precarious friendships, and divided loyalties. These issues are everyday issues for students in the middle school. According to Mary Heller (1991), after conducting a survey of middle school students about what was important to them, the issue of friendships kept appearing:

The importance of friendships made and broken during adolescence is a recurring theme in literature for the young. The social milieu of the classroom is the ultimate backdrop for learning in middle school and junior high. Taking advantage of the social nature of adolescents in the classroom environment is a special key to successful teaching at this level. Advocates of middle
school education have long advised that the child be at the center of the curriculum. (p.159)

This theme of friendship is interwoven with the two major themes addressed in the curriculum guide. During the study of prejudice and survival, it becomes clear that through particular relationships and support from friends, the Logan family is able to cope with these two issues.

The California English-Language Arts Framework says, "Direct teaching of literature helps students move into, through, and beyond the literary work to a new understanding of themselves and the world around them" (California State Department of Education, 1987, p. 17). Taylor's novel explicitly illustrates the struggles of growing up in a racially prejudice society. It focuses on the Logan family who desperately struggle to survive by adaptation, and it discusses the consequences of those who refuse to conform. The issues are sometimes harsh and unsettling, yet applicable to today. In the newspapers, on the news and in conversations, prejudice may be subtle, but it is still there. Examples of harsh treatment of a particular race or religious sect show up daily in our society, as well as in the schools. The Logan family is subject to cruelties based on their skin color. This is not an unfamiliar concept to the Big Bear Middle School student. Margaret Snyder (personal communication, May 10, 1994), as the Middle School counselor said, "I have on file eight to ten incidents a year arising from the use of racial slurs of one student against
another. This is a large number relative to the fact that only 13% of the school's student body is non-white."

During the novel, the students will read where certain behaviors are adapted by members of the Logan family to survive. This is also a behavior that middle school students understand:

Middle school students strive to be accepted, some with the use of handsignals, or the wearing of baggy clothes because it is cool to look like they belong to a gang. Kids this age need to belong to a group and will adapt certain behaviors in order to survive the peer pressures, or else they will be teased unmercifully for refusing to conform. (M. Snyder, personal communication, May 11, 1994)

Survival is a daily struggle for the student who is different, or deemed "strange" by his peers.

After the reading of Taylor's novel, the hope is that the students will be more aware of the societal prejudices and pressures around them, and will act in a more sensitive manner to situations where previously they would have merely reacted, and not thought about the consequences of their behavior. The messages of the cruelty and the pain of prejudice will be a part of them, urging them to temper their behavior to enhance society rather than hinder it.

The project pays special attention to cultural and aesthetic values and helps the teacher encourage the students to make immediate application to their own lives. Discussion questions are designed to help the students discover how they really feel about what is happening to the Logan family and make direct connections to their own world and their
particular situation. Activities are introduced to facilitate the writing and reading process of learning and making meaning of a novel and the concepts therein. Connections to current events are made to help the students see the relevance of the novel to their own lives. The students are also asked to put themselves in the place of the characters to discover how they would react in a similar situation. There is a need to draw students into well-written literature to learn about the world around us, and this project is designed to facilitate that process.

Integration is also a key concept in any literature curriculum. The California English-Language Arts Framework states, "The art of teaching, then, lies in helping students discover how good listeners, speakers, teachers, and writers accomplish their ends in communicating with others" (California State Department of Education, 1987, p. 16). This project introduces activities that incorporate a variety of strategies to enable the students to further their communication processes and integrate the language arts.

An effective method of practicing integration is by having students work together in groups. Discussion groups are formed to promote the ability to participate in a group discussion. They learn to listen and paraphrase others' ideas as a method of validation for the speaker. Listening is emphasized as they hear what others had to say in regards to prejudice and life as a black person in the 1930s. The students will be listening to each other as well, as new
ideas are expressed and explored. Daily writing is also incorporated into the unit to help the students learn to put their thoughts clearly and precisely on paper. These writings are shared, again to help students learn awareness and acceptance of alternative viewpoints. Art is brought into the curriculum as another method of expression for students who feel intimidated by or uncomfortable in the use of the writing process. These strategies are designed to promote the students improvement of communication processes to better prepare them to be responsible citizens in society.

Crossing the Disciplines

The School Improvement Office (1993) in California has parameters for an exemplary Social Science program:

In a strong program, students think creatively and develop abilities in such a way that they value themselves as more knowledgeable, discerning, critical, and participatory citizens. The talent of critical thinking involves the use of such skills as reading, writing, and speaking articulately and logically and utilizing relevant facts in forming opinions and evaluations. Engaging activities allow students to apply knowledge to new or different situations, to judge how ideas impact human conduct, and to use history as example and analogy for issues in their own lives and in the world today. (p.88)

To accomplish this goal, the School Improvement Office also says, "Students use literature of and about a period to better understand historical times, places, and people" (California State Department of Education, 1993, p. 94). Taylor's novel is an example of this type of insightful
literature; this is why it won the Newbery Medal and has been chosen for this project.

The California History-Social Science Framework also advocates the use of literature. One of the seventeen distinguishing characteristics of the framework says:

This framework emphasizes the importance of enriching the study of history with the use of literature, both literature of the period and literature about the period. Poetry, novels, plays, essays, documents, inaugural addresses, myths legends, tall tales, biographies, and religious literature help to shed light on the life and times of the people. Such literature helps to reveal the way people say themselves, their ideas and values, their fears and dreams, and the way they interpreted their own times.

(p.4)

The framework says that through literature, students are able to make history come alive, and are able to see that real people existed, and had hopes, fears, and dreams also. To understand a society, the framework suggests turning to the artists and poets of the time to learn more about the culture and its priorities, as "art and literature reflect the inner life of a people....A culture cannot be fully understood without knowledge of the poems, plays, dance, visual art, and other works that express its spirit" (California State Department of Education, 1988, p. 15).

Statement of the Problem

This project is a curriculum guide to Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry. This guide must challenge eighth-grade students to think about their world and ways to make it a better place
for themselves and others. In order to make it relevant and meaningful, the guide will be interdisciplinary in the sense that it will provide extensions into the social studies curriculum. These extensions will build background to help teachers effectively use the novel to foster critical thinking among the students about issues in the 1930s that are still relevant today and to provide an opportunity for exploring the issues of racial prejudice, inequality, and survival, moreover, it will focus on the integration of the language processes of thinking, listening, speaking, reading, and writing needed to function responsibly as citizens in today's society. The guide will facilitate an indepth comprehension and appreciation of the novel itself. The guide's organization will be easy to follow and use as a support and resource for the teacher. It will explore the structure of this novel as well as the content of the novel as it pertains to our society today.
Adolescent Learners

Students at Big Bear Middle School come from a variety of living situations and ethnic backgrounds. Within the school there are "87% Whites, 9.2% Hispanics, 1.3% American Indians, 1.3% African Americans, and .7% Asians" (Nancy McGiveney, personal communication, May 11, 1994). These students have such variety of needs that teaching becomes quite a challenge. Despite the problems of adolescence and diversity, middle-school teachers are expected to produce educated, well-informed citizens in nine months. It is not impossible, but it is difficult.

Linda Rief (1992), talks about the needs of her eighth graders:

No matter what I present in that classroom, we all see things differently. It is this diversity that I try to foster in my classroom. I want to hear all the diverse voices of my kids. I want them to hear each other. We are all learners/teachers. (p. 3)

She continues to discuss their needs and her methods of meeting them. She tries to make the learning fun and most important, to help her students "gain independence as learners, knowing, and trusting their own choices" (1992, p. 5).

Nancie Atwell (1987) also addresses the diverse needs of the middle school student. She stresses the need to work
with the students, not against them. She says:

First, teachers of junior high have to accept the reality of junior high students. Confusion, bravado, restlessness, a preoccupation with peers, and the questioning of authority are not manifestations of poor attitude; they are the hallmarks of this particular time of life. By nature adolescents are volatile and social, and our teaching can take advantage of this, helping kids find meaningful ways to channel these energies and social needs instead of trying to legislate them." (p. 25)

At this age, school is not at the top of the students' list. Adolescents are more concerned about the immediate. Literature can be an avenue for them to discuss and share what is important to them. It appeals to all kinds of needs. However, an interest in literature is not easy to promote at this age. Mary Hellenistic (1991) says it this way:

It is the rare teen who finds reading and writing magical in middle school or junior high. Anyone who has been there will tell you that this can be a tough crowd. To a young adolescent, not much magic happens between grades 6 and 8. Everything is very real, very now, and often very frustrating. Growing into literate adulthood is simultaneously painful and joyous. (p. 159)

Yet, even as this diversity can be frustrating for the teacher, Nancie Atwell (1987) offers hope:

When the content of a junior high English course is ideas - thinking and learning through writing, reading, and talking - and when students in the course pursue their own ideas in the company of friends and their teacher, the junior high English classroom has the potential to become an interesting place. (p. 40)

These teachers suggest that a positive attitude toward literature and writing can be fostered at this age with
careful attention by the teacher to the needs of the students and with the provision of freedom to the students to take part in determining their own education.

**Instructional Strategies**

Because of this diversity of needs, a variety of instructional practices are necessary. Nancie Atwell (1987) advocates a number of useful practices in the middle school classroom:

We have to organize our junior high teaching in ways that will help our kids begin to understand and participate in adult reality. This means more independent activity, more say in what happens in the classroom, and more responsibility for their own learning. It also means teachers who model the importance and usefulness in our own lives of the subjects we teach, demonstrating our own processes as learners and our personal knowledge of our fields, inviting students inside academia by showing that inside is a worthwhile and interesting place to be. (p. 26)

In 1987, a book was published that listed criteria for curriculum for the middle school student. *Caught in the Middle*, published by the California State Department of Education (1987) states:

The characteristics of young adolescents are too often interpreted as obstacles to learning. When this happens, instructional practices can fight the restless energy, fascination with peer culture norms and their world which are typical of middle grade students. (p. 35)

The literature just cited suggests that students must be worked with, not against, to channel this energy and fascination into the thinking ability to make decisions and
to come to conclusions about the world around them. They need the freedom to express themselves, explore ideas, share their decisions, and make connections to the real world. Communication lines must be open and non-threatening. The curriculum needs to be active and engaging. Rather than a teacher stating facts and having the students repeat them back, the students need to be involved in the learning of the facts themselves. Caught in the Middle (1987) also says:

Students learn by doing. They learn from seeking answers to questions that have stimulated their imaginations. There should be many opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to look for answers, to test hypotheses, and to reach tentative conclusions. (p. 37)

Therefore it seems that middle-school students may be some of the most difficult students to teach, and yet with their energy and enthusiasm for living channeled in the right direction by use of a variety of strategies, they can also be some of the most exciting and rewarding students as well.

Literature and Integrated Language Arts

The consensus of the previous authors is that middle-school students are diverse, each with their own set of needs. How then does one teacher teach to that diversity effectively? A possible answer can be found in The California English-Language Arts Framework (1987) issued by the California State Department of Education. It provides some definitive guidelines as to the components of an
effective language arts program. It specifies an integrated approach using all the elements of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The framework has several overall goals:

* To prepare all students to function as informed and effective citizens in our democratic society.
* To prepare all students to function effectively in the world of work.
* To prepare all students to realize personal fulfillment. (p. 1)

To prepare students in these three areas, it is necessary to prepare them to be communicators. In almost all work situations, and in all personal relationships, one must be able to give, take, and decode messages. The best way to get ready for this is to practice these processes. And what better place than the classroom to receive non-threatening feedback and guidance in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing?

Healy (1993) talks about the fact that, unfortunately, sometimes there is no connection among these processes in the classroom, and the time is divided into different sections to teach each process separately. She believes we need to teach children to see the connections among all the information they learn in school. She says:

Instruction that links, rather than separates, the components of language learning is a natural vehicle for making up gaps in children's language backgrounds. It can also be an effective means of engaging them in thinking, making mental connections, and expressing themselves clearly....When larger blocks of classroom time are devoted to linking skills, children are asked to write about what they
read, read what they have written, talk about both, and learn to listen to what others have to say. (p. 300-1)

It is with the integration of all these processes, that effective teaching and learning take place.

The California Framework uses literature as the basis for working on these processes. Students need to be challenged to discover meaning from their lives. Literature can do that. The framework believes a literature-based program provides three important elements to discovering the meaning of human experience through the language of literature:

* An in-depth study of core literary works, those substantive readings which speak to important questions and values all of us in a community must address.
* Reading of literature that extends the study of the core work, captures students' individual interests, and challenges them to explore new avenues on their own.
* Recreational-motivational reading that is based on students' natural curiosity and that encourages them to read for pleasure. (p. 7)

Jim Trelease (1989) is also a strong supporter of the use of literature in the classroom. He says, "Literature is considered such an important medium because - more than television, more than film, more than art or overhead projectors - literature brings us closest to the human heart" (p. 13). He even goes on to say that "the very purpose of literature [is] to provide meaning in our lives" (p. 13).

Reading core literature, or literature that is recommended by the district as grade-level appropriate, helps
the students learn about their world around them, and about their own system of values, beliefs, and ethics. All students need to be exposed to well-written language to give them a model of what works and what doesn't.

Listening to literature being read aloud also develops an important language process. Students need to hear literature as well as read it. Having a teacher read books aloud, or reading in a small group, helps the student hear what it is supposed to sound like, and teaches them to listen carefully, which is an important element in becoming an effective communicator.

Questions often arise when teachers are told it is important to read aloud to all ages. Some feel it to be a waste of valuable class time. Jim Trelease (1987) feels differently and answers the question of why reading aloud is so important by saying:

Answered simply, the initial reasons are the same reasons you talk to a child: to reassure, to entertain, to inform or explain, to arouse curiosity, and to inspire - and to do it all personally, not impersonally with a machine. All those experiences create or strengthen a positive attitude about reading, and attitude is the foundation stone upon which you build appetites. Regular reading aloud strengthens children's reading, writing, and speaking skills - and thus the entire civilizing process. (p. 2)

He goes on to say that this is all accomplished because being read to develops listening comprehension. If a child never hears a particular word, he will never say it, and if he's never heard it or said, imagine trying to read or write it. "Listening comprehension must come before reading
comprehension. The listening vocabulary is the reservoir of words that feeds the reading vocabulary pool" (Trelease, 1989, p. 2).

Reading aloud, aside from being pleasurable, encompasses several more benefits:

It exposes the student to: a positive reading role model, new information, the pleasures of reading, rich vocabulary, good grammar, a broader variety of books than [the student] would choose on his own, richly textured lives outside his own experience, the English language spoken in a manner distinctly different from that in television sitcoms or on MTV. At the same time, the child's imagination is stimulated, attention span stretched, listening comprehension improved, emotional development nurtured, the reading-writing connection established, and, where they exist, negative attitudes reshaped to positive. (Trelease, 1989, p. 16)

Given these powerful arguments, it would be difficult to think of a reason not to incorporate this activity into the curriculum.

Within the reading curriculum there needs to be a writing strand. Writing is an integral part of any language arts program. There is a direct connection between reading and writing, and they should not be separated. Mary Heller (1991) says:

Reading and writing provide access to literacy. We learn the value of communication through the written word very early as children struggling to master print in our environment....The need to know what the words mean is at first a curiosity soon replaced by the desire to communicate. The acquisition of reading and writing enable us to develop into the unique individuals we are all capable of becoming. (p. 1)
That writing should be included as part of a language class was stressed by a study conducted by a group of teachers on the relationship between reading and writing. Their findings confirmed the necessary connection between reading and writing:

Our examples of classroom practice demonstrate the potential power of students writing as well as reading literature. Writing and reading in tandem gives the students a chance to engage with literature, to develop as authors, and to compare their own efforts with the work of their peers and professional authors. (Dyson, 1989, p. 183)

With integration in a language arts class, the student is able to practice and use writing as another tool toward effective communication. Gerry Brookes (1988) says that when students write about literature, "Then they can discover that writing is a tool for thinking and rethinking. Through such a process they can discover that understanding, of things read and of the world, can be negotiated, a lesson we all learn and relearn" (p. 250). He feels that people are in a constant state of learning, and the combination of reading and writing is a "means of discovering what one's mental model is, of discovering and testing what one thinks" (p. 245).

The National Council of Teachers of English has also conducted studies on the importance of writing in the classroom, and Judith Langor (1987) says "that activities involving writing...lead to better learning than activities involving reading and studying only. Writing assists learning (p. 135). As students put their ideas on paper, it
helps them to solidify their own thinking and organize it in a clear manner.

The use of literature in this process helps students reflect on their own lives in comparison to others, and writing helps them clarify and grow in understanding of the world around them.

There is a similar message that each author is supporting. Writing needs to be an integral part of any reading and language instruction, and the processes are so interrelated that to teach them separately is not reality as we rarely use one process at a time in the real world. People read and write daily, no matter what career or position in life they pursue. Nancie Atwell (1989) sums up the connection between reading and writing very concisely by saying, "I know now that writers write reading, and that readers read writing" (p. 21). When a writer is writing, it is usually for an audience to read and so the writer's product often becomes reading material for someone else. Students need to be prepared for this connection in society, and the combination of reading and writing taught in the classroom is a positive step toward that preparation.

Another important process needed for effective communication is proficiency in oral language. People talk daily and it is essential that they be able to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas without the complication of misinterpretation. Story-telling was the primary medium through which literature was handed down through history, and even today, most information acquired by students is received
aurally. Healy (1993), in a discussion about what is needed in order to have an effective curriculum, says:

It is folly to ignore the importance of oral storytelling, oral history, and public speaking in a world that will communicate increasingly without the mediation of print. These skills build language competence in grammar, memory, attention, and visualization, among many other abilities. (p. 290)

Hart (1983) also sees the need to develop the oral language processes of students to prepare them better to function in society. He talks about activities that are compatible with the brain, as opposed to antagonistic or non-compatible activities that are done because they've always been there even though meaningless and useless. He says:

Students must talk and communicate to learn well. Few disagree that a good command of language, an ability to convey ideas and information in speech and writing, and to receive and understand communication is an essential body of skill to function well in almost any role in society. Yet conventional schools expend a huge amount of energy and time suppressing talk, and communication becomes corrupted into exercises to be marked for grades. Desirable brain-compatible activities, then, include talking about what one is doing...talking within small teams working on common tasks or projects; asking questions for guidance, information, or clarification; public talking such as in making announcements or addressing an audience; and communication by speech directly and via writing or some instrumental means. (p.164)

Guideline number six of the English-Language-Arts Model Curriculum Guide says, "Students develop oral communication skills through both formal and informal speaking activities" (1985, p. 13). From birth, oral language is probably the
"most pervasive means of learning about the world we live in" (California State Department of Education, 1987, p. 13). The classroom provides a comfortable setting to practice this necessary process before entering the world as citizen or employee.

A Language Arts program needs to provide "a rich variety of activities and learning resources that enable them to make sense of and find meaning for their lives through literature" (School Improvement Office, 1993, p. 64). The processes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing need to be effectively developed to enable students to leave the academic arena as "informed and responsible citizens, competent and successful members of the work force, and thinking, fulfilled individuals within our society" (California State Department of Education, 1987, p. 4).

The Social Nature of Literature Learning

People do not function in isolation. Learning to work in a group is a survival skill needed to be successful in society. Problems and decisions are usually talked out or discussed, anywhere from negotiating bedtimes with children to discussion of foreign affairs at the White House. The middle-school student is primed for this skill as they are extremely social at this age. Carol Gilles (1989), a middle-school teacher, wrote an article, "Reading, Writing and Talking: Using Literature Study Groups," in which she
discusses the use of literature discussion groups. She says:

Adolescence is an intensely social time: students need to talk to their peers....Interaction with peers is important to them, yet in most classrooms we demand quiet. Students involved in literature study groups are invited to talk together for a specific purpose: to engage in purposeful dialogue about the book....Each person in the group is responsible for discussing the book and, through the discussion, learning more about literature and themselves. (p. 40)

To stifle this need into silent, independent work is a futile attempt. Independent work is too often stressed in the classroom, and collaboration is often considered cheating. However, it is more and more apparent that "learning is not so much individual production of acquired knowledge as it is social construction of new knowledge. This construction occurs best in an interactive environment where people are encouraged to learn together" (Golub & Reid, 1989, p. 45). Learning is a social act and students tend to learn the most from their peers. In approaching literature then, the literature suggests that teachers let the students discuss what they read, disagree about interpretations, and hear other peers' opinions.

Golub (1988), a strong advocate of collaborative learning, says:

Collaborative learning has as its main feature a structure that allows for student talk: students are supposed to talk with each other as they work together on various classroom projects and activities, and it is in this talking that much of the learning occurs. (p. 1)

Group discussion is a much richer learning experience if the
students themselves are given the freedom to express their own opinions in a group of peers as opposed to just in front of the teacher.

Collaborative learning activities, then, allow students to learn by 'talking it out', assimilating their ideas and information through interaction with others. It also changes the role or function of the teacher from 'information giver' to 'guide on the side,' one who is available to respond to the students' emerging insights. (Golub, 1988, p. 2)

Within a group, students have the opportunity to do some of the research themselves and are able to share their ideas and come to their own conclusions. Groups help the students learn from each other and generally speaking, the knowledge acquired in a group "is greater than the knowledge possessed by any single member" (Leinhardt, 1992, p. 23). In writing, students need to share their work in the context of peer editing, revision, and just verbal feedback. Often peers are better critics than teachers.

In a group the teacher becomes a facilitator of the learning of the students. The students will soon discover the rich resources available in the people around them. Golub (1988) says, "The idea of allowing students to work cooperatively on a lesson or classroom project is a most worthwhile approach to English instruction" (p. 2).

In summary, cooperative groups encourage the students to discover their own ideas and share them with their peers. The students then take some control and responsibility for their own learning, which inevitably leads to an independent and self-motivated learner.
Social Studies in the Literature Program

In addition to the trend for the integration of thinking, speaking, listening, reading, and writing in a language arts program, there has been a call for the cross-curricular teaching of literature and social studies.

Atwell (1987) quotes John Dewey as saying:

From the standpoint of the child, the great waste in school comes from his inability to utilize the experiences he gets outside of school in any complete and free way; while, on the other hand, he is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning at school. (p. 50)

Kroll (1990) agrees with the existence of this problem and quotes Vartan Gregorian as saying:

The greatest challenge facing educators is to help students learn ways to form connections between subject matters and to help them synthesize the daunting amount of material available even within a single discipline. (p. 46)

This "connection" between subject matters, or more specifically, language arts and social studies, can be facilitated with literature. Literature, is in a sense, a recording of history as it happened. It is often a reflection of the society in which it was written. Sanacore (1990), a professor in the department of Reading, Language, and Cognition at Hofstra University, New York, believes that the two areas of social studies and language are closely interrelated. He says, "Many language activities occur during social studies lessons, including reading textbooks, discussing ideas, making speeches, writing essays, and
studying notes" (p.414). He feels that these activities are a natural setting for the promotion of literacy with the use of literature and the pleasure of reading. In his suggestions of how to promote this connection, he says:

Include literature as part of the instructional program. Historical fiction, biography, autobiography, and diary help readers to personalize history....Students can experience history through literature more dramatically, and can often have a more indepth transaction with the subject, when it deals with characters "who were there." (p. 414)

He, like Trelease mentioned earlier, also advocates reading aloud as an excellent way to motivate reluctant readers to read.

Social Studies is the study of people, their culture, beliefs, hopes, and dreams. Literature is a recording of these issues. The literature suggests that it makes sense to use both areas to support each other in helping students learn about themselves and the world around them.

Conclusion

Based on the literature review, an effective language arts program is composed of several different elements.

First, there needs to be an obvious integration of the language processes of thinking, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. And these need to be worked on in tandem, not as separate processes. These processes will lend themselves to the development of capable and thinking students. Second, students need to be allowed to communicate with each other
and with the teacher in the classroom setting. They need to be encouraged to seek out answers to their questions, to become inquisitive and active participants in their education. Discussion groups and learning from their peers become an integral part of the curriculum. Third, the social sciences need to be linked with the literature read. Students need to see the connection between the recording of historical events and what they say about society today, and how the issues, despite their antiquity, are still relevant to today. Students need to see how they can make a difference in their own situations. Fourth, it is important that students participate in their own education, as they learn how to become effective communicators, and how to use what they read and discover to enhance the world they live in today.

The attached curriculum unit for Taylor's *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, effectively incorporates the above four elements. Within in the unit there is an integration of the five language processes, discussion groups are set up to enhance the learning of the students, direct connections are made to historical events and literature, and the students are involved in their own learning processes as they explore the novel and make application to their lives today.
CHAPTER THREE
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Project Goals

The goal for this project is to develop a curriculum that will challenge students to critically think about their world and how to make it a better place for themselves and others. It will also teach the students about the actual structure of a novel and the literary devices used by the author to strengthen the novel's message.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry is a powerful novel and motivates students to think about the issues of prejudice and survival and how these issues effect the lives of the students. The novel is fast-paced and keeps the students attention and the main characters are of a similar age to the students so it is easy for the students to relate to the happenings in the characters' lives.

Project Objectives

One of the objectives of the project is to challenge the students to think about historical issues that are relevant to them today, and to think about how what they do and say will effect the future. Opportunities will be provided for the students to explore the issues of racial prejudice, inequality, and survival. Current events will be brought in to show that these issues still exist. Students will discuss how these were dealt with in the past as well as some
constructive ways to deal with these issues in the present. Direct application to the students' lives will be emphasized in an effort to show relevancy and how these prejudices can be generalized across a variety of groups, as in today's society.

Another objective is to introduce two of the main themes that run throughout the novel. There are several themes that could be discussed. However, the issues of prejudice and survival are the most prevalent. The friendships that help the Logan family survive also play an important part in the discussions of these themes. As was pointed out earlier, friendships are important to the middle school student, and as the characters learn to deal with living in a prejudice society and how to survive the hostilities with the help of their friends, the students are able to relate to the characters' situations. Some of the topics of discussion may force some students out of their comfort zones with the purpose of helping them to really look at their own value systems and prejudices.

A third objective is to increase students' proficiency with the language processes of thinking, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Activities involving group work and individual work are included. They will be writing and discussing their thoughts; they will be sharing ideas and creative writing in small groups and in front of the whole class. They will be exposed to and read other literature of similar themes or time periods to set this novel in its proper context. Oral presentations are suggested, and the
writing process is emphasized.

A final objective of this project is to teach the students about the structure of a novel, and the literary devices used to convey a vivid image or message. Discussions and activities are held about the characters and how they are developed and the setting and the sensory details used to create a mental picture. The plot, conflict, and climax are outlined and analyzed. Students will also be engaged in creating their own short writing pieces as they create characters and settings. Literary devices such as flashbacks, personifications, similes, and metaphors are highlighted as well as opportunities for the students to practice creating their own.

This project will allow students to finish with a clear understanding of a black family's fight against racism, their struggle to survive, and how similar struggles are going on around the students today. In the process of these discoveries, the students will be improving their communication processes as well, to better equip them to express themselves outside the classroom.
CHAPTER FOUR
PROJECT DESIGN
Addressing Learning Needs

The design of this project is grounded in observation, experience, and the research literature on the learning needs of the students. As students learn, they are adding new information about their experiences to the existing ones, forcing them to either enlarge their existing categories, or create new ones. Hoskisson (1987), talks about Piaget's (1968) two processes of assimilation and accommodation.

Assimilation is the cognitive process by which information from the environment is integrated into existing schemata [all previous information and experiences of a person]. In contrast, accommodation is the cognitive process by which existing schemata are modified or new schemata are restructured to adapt to the environment. (p. 6)

The sections in this project are designed to introduce new information to the students to help them develop or rearrange their current experiences.

Organization of the Project

The seven sections are divided into the three stages of Into, Through, and Beyond the novel (see Appendix A).

The INTO Stage

The first two sections take the students "Into" the novel by providing background on the author and the historical
setting, as well as a summary of the novel. This gives the students some prior knowledge to facilitate learning new concepts as they begin to read the novel.

Section One is an introduction to the novel. It contains a summary of the novel, a biography of the author, Mildred Taylor, and a list of the other books she has written about the Logan family, as well as background information in regards to winning a Newbery Award and the criteria involved. There is a short summary of each of her novels to help the teacher decide if any of her other books should be included in the unit. These would make good independent reading assignments after the conclusion of the curriculum unit. This section also includes a list of other titles that carry similar themes to those of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* such as prejudice, survival, and friendship. This list would lend itself, again, to books that could be read aloud to the class, or as independent reading assignments.

Section Two gives some background information on what was happening during the 1930s around the country. Hoskisson (1987) says,

> Students learn by relating the known to the unknown as they try to make sense out of what they encounter in their environment. Instruction should be focused on helping students relate what they know to what they do not know. (p. 11)

If the students know what was happening at the time of the novel, they will have a better grasp of the situation surrounding the Logan family. A list will show important
events and people surrounding this time period. A map highlighting Mississippi and Louisiana is also included.

The THROUGH Stage

Sections Three, Four, and Five take the student "Through" the novel with a summary of the chapters, vocabulary words, and comprehension discussion questions to help the students gain meaning from what they are reading. Literary devices and the structure of the novel are discussed as these elements fall from the literature during the reading.

Section Three is a chronological lesson plan which proceeds through the book, chapter by chapter, to make the reading and teaching of the actual novel easier for the teacher. The chapters are grouped by two and each group has a list of vocabulary words with their definitions as they are used in the novel and the page number where the word is found. There is a brief summary of the contents of those two chapters as well as possible discussion questions pertaining to the events in the chapter. The questions focus beyond the literal and enable students to discuss the meaning of the events and to apply their interpretations to their current lives and activities. These can be used as group or class discussion questions, or as group or individual writing assignments.

Section Four discusses a variety of literary devices that are used by the author to help create an effective novel. This section may be used as a separate unit prior to
the teaching of the novel, or as the need arises to draw attention to a particular device encountered in the novel. The concepts covered include the simile, metaphor, personification, flashbacks, foreshadowing, and descriptive detail. There are activities and questions that can be run off by the teacher. Examples are shown from the novel and a chance for the students to create their own is available. These devices are ones that should be familiar to the middle school student, as they often appear in literature at the middle school level; however, the students tend not to use these devices in their own writing. After the students becomes comfortable with these devices, they should be able to use them to enhance their own writing.

Section Five deals with the essential parts of a novel. This section may be used as an introduction to the reading of a novel, or as the need arises. These parts include the Setting (time, place), Characters (major, minor, flat, round), Plot (exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, denouement) and Point of View (first person, omniscient third-person, limited third-person). Each element is explained and examples are given. The five types of conflict: human v.s. God, human v.s. nature, human v.s. society, human v.s. self, human v.s. human, are also discussed. Examples of each are given and again, a chance for the students to produce some of their own. These particular elements were chosen because Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry is written in such a manner that the parts are easily identified. These are also elements that
show up in middle school literature, and are often discussed in a middle school classroom. The understanding of the elements of a novel and the author's use of literary devices often helps the student understand better what the author is trying to say.

The BEYOND Stage

Sections Six and Seven take the student "Beyond" the literature by helping the students generalize the concepts discussed and apply them to their own lives. They will critically think about the issues that come from the novel to create a graphic representation of the relevance of the novel for them.

Section Six talks about two possible themes that could be explored. There are other themes that the teacher may choose to focus on that are also an integral part of the novel, such as friendship, loyalty, and peer pressure, however the primary focus of this guide is on prejudice and survival because these are the two themes that are the most powerful throughout the novel.

One thematic strand deals with the prejudice/discrimination against the black race in the 1930s in the deep South, and the other strand with the tactics of survival practiced by these blacks in order to maintain a place in their world, as well as the tactics used against them. The teacher may choose to focus on one particular theme for the entire novel, choosing activities that correlate to that choice, or use a mix of the two themes,
choosing activities from both strands. (Note: To preserve the continuity of the novel's vocabulary, throughout the curriculum guide the term "black" will be used in place of the current term, "African-American").

Hoskisson (1987) says, "Experience is the most basic, concrete way of learning" (p. 11), so the activities used throughout this section are active and encourage the students to participate in a variety of experiences. Activities are developed by the method of "Into", "Through", and "Beyond" for each separate theme. There are group activities and individual ones. They are centered around the processes of thinking, reading, writing, and speaking. The students are encouraged to look beyond the surface of the novel with discussion questions and group interaction. There are presentations in front of the class, as well as work done at home on an individual basis. An emphasis is also placed on the generalization of the concepts discussed to the lives of the students. This section is set up in such a way as to give the teacher a variety of choices and the freedom to choose which ones will work for his class.

Section Seven is the culminating project. Instead of the traditional true/false, multiple choice, essay question test, this project helps the students to derive their own meaning and message from the novel. It is called a "graphic map" and the students create this, either individually or in groups, to portray the deeper meaning they pulled from this unit. They first select a focus for their project. Next
they find a unifying symbol or collection of symbols to represent their focus. Quotations are taken directly from the book to substantiate their ideas and the direction their graphic takes as a representation of the novel. Finally, they integrate colors, symbols, and words into a visual construct that represents what they have learned from the novel. It may be directly related to the book, or it could branch out into other works by the same author or other books that carry a similar theme. The reason this type of culminating project was chosen is because rather than requiring students to merely recall facts and events from the novel, it enables them to explore a variety of themes, interpretations, and meanings that they themselves have discovered and can apply directly to their own lives.

This guide encompasses a great deal of information and insight into the novel, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Several themes are explored and applied to the students' current lives. Discussion groups take place to explore the experience of living through the hostile prejudice that is based exclusively on skin color. The students should finish with a clear understanding of the plight of the black man in the 1930s in the deep South, as well as the methods used by Mildred Taylor to effectively portray this emotional topic to the reader.
APPENDIX A

AN EIGHTH-GRADE, INTEGRATED, THEMATIC UNIT CURRICULUM GUIDE

FOR

ROLL OF THUNDER, HEAR MY CRY
This guide is divided into 7 separate sections designed to help the teacher take the students through the entire novel and enhance their enjoyment and learning experience.

INTO the Novel

Section One
This section is an introduction to the novel. There is a short summary of the entire novel, as well as a summary of three other novels written by Mildred Taylor that are also about the Logan family. A brief history of the prestigious Newbery Award, which was awarded to Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry in 1977, is provided to illustrate the quality of Taylor's book and why it was chosen for this project. This is followed by a short biography of Mildred Taylor and her life.

In addition to this, there are several book lists divided up into the themes of prejudice, survival, and friendship, that may be used as independent reading assignments or as books that the teacher may want to read after finishing the unit on Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry.

Section Two
This section gives a background on the 1930s, and what was happening around the nation at this time. This may be a section the teacher chooses to go over with the students prior to reading the novel to familiarize them with what was happening at the time the novel takes place. There is also a map of the United States with Mississippi and Louisiana highlighted so the students can visualize where the novel is taking place.

THROUGH the Novel

Section Three
This section is a chapter by chapter summary of the book, as well as vocabulary and discussion questions for every two chapters.

The vocabulary and the definitions as they pertain to the use in the novel are provided. At the end of each definition is the page number where the word can be found. Following are some strategies for teaching these
vocabulary words to the students.

1. List the words on the board. Ask the students, "What do you already know about these words?" Let the students discuss their previous knowledge as this provides a connection for them to new knowledge.
2. Tell the students briefly what the chapters covered are about and let the students predict the meanings of the words they do not recognize.
3. Read the words in context from the novel. Let the students make further predictions, or ascertain the true meaning by the context.
4. Read the surrounding sentences and help the students refine the meaning of the word with use of the previous cues and context clues.
5. Use the word in writing or additional reading. Students need to learn that to make a word theirs, they must read it and use it in their own writing.*


Additional strategies:
- Categorize the words into nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc. Read the words in context to try and determine the meanings. Find synonyms for each of the words.
- As a method of review, divide the class into several teams (4-6 members each). Have one team send a representative to the front of the room. This student is to stand with his back to the blackboard. Put up one of the vocabulary words behind him, and then give his team members 30 seconds to give him clues to guess which word is written behind him. The clues must be related to the discussed definition. Points are acquired according to how many words are guessed correctly. Each team takes turns guessing and giving clues.

There are also several discussion questions listed at the end of every two chapters. These may be discussed in class, assigned as journal entries or as homework writing assignments. The teacher may choose not to use all of them, but to focus on one or two exclusively. If used in independent writing assignments, be sure and spend some class
time discussing the students' answers. Some important concepts are covered in these questions.

Section Four
This section covers common literary devices that are used in the novel and provides opportunities for the students to use them in their own writing. The devices covered are simile, metaphor, personification, flashback, foreshadowing, and descriptive detail. Examples from the novel are given, as well as assignments for the students. There are reproducible worksheets provided for the teacher as well. Not all of these devices need to be covered; it is at the discretion of the teacher. This information may be used prior to the teaching of the novel, or as it appears in the reading.

Section Five
This section explains the key elements that are found in a novel, including Setting (time, place), Characters (major, minor, flat, round), Plot (exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, denouement) and Point of View (first person, omniscient third-person, limited third person). Types of conflict are discussed as well. Examples for all elements are given from the novel, in addition to a chance for the students to create their own.

Again, these may be used according to the teacher's choice, either as an introduction to the novel, or as each situation arises in the reading. Page 41 may be copied for student use to help the students chart out the various elements chapter by chapter as they read.

BEYOND the Novel

Section Six
In this section, two themes, prejudice and survival, are focused upon. Within these two themes, friendships and relationships are emphasized. Both themes are divided up into the sections of "Into", "Through", and "Beyond". A variety of activities for each theme are listed for the teacher to choose from that encompass the processes of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and listening. Each activity is thoroughly explained in detail to facilitate its use.

Section Seven
This is the culminating project and it may be used as a final evaluation or assessment of the students' learning at
the end of the novel unit. Rather than a traditional true/false, multiple choice, essay question test, this project helps the students to derive their own meaning from the novel. It is called a "graphic map" and the students create it, either individually or in groups, to portray the deeper meaning they pulled from this novel. This project does not merely have the students recall facts and events from the novel, but enables them to explore a variety of themes, interpretations, and meanings that they themselves have discovered and can apply directly to their own lives. The process is described in detail in this section.

I, personally, have used this as a measure of student learning at the end of a novel, and was extremely pleased at the results and found it to be a very effective way to ascertain what the students learned from the novel itself. The project is also a great way for the students to demonstrate the use of the integration processes to illustrate the variety of themes that can be pulled from this novel.

**Perspective Teaching Time Frame**

This unit is adaptable to a variety of time frames. On page 42 is an example of how to teach the novel in four weeks. This is just an example, and may be adjusted to meet the needs of the students. The teacher may choose to focus on specific areas, which may lengthen teaching time. If it is necessary to shorten the teaching time, the teacher may want to give an oral overview of certain chapters, or assign the students to read them at home, and briefly discuss the chapters the next day. The variety of activities will fall on days when the chapters are shorter and there is extra time or an oral overview of a chapter is given.
## Elements of a Novel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Chapter ____</th>
<th>Chapter ____</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
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<td>Place:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>Major:</td>
<td>Major:</td>
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<td>Minor:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Minor:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sequence of Events (Plot)</td>
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</table>
## Four Week Planning Chart

### Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WEEK 1</strong></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td>Historical overview; Introduction to novel and themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td>Introductory activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>WEEK 2</strong></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th><strong>WEEK 3</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
<td>Final discussion and summarization</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WEEK 4</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td>Culminating Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td>Culminating Project</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td>Culminating Project</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday</strong></td>
<td>Oral/Written Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
<td>Oral/Written Presentations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTO
the
Novel

These first two sections take the students "Into" the novel by providing background on the author and the historical setting, as well as a summary of the novel. This gives the students some prior knowledge to facilitate learning new concepts as they begin to read the novel.

Section One is an introduction to the novel. Section Two gives background on the novel's historical setting.
Section One

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

Roll of thunder
hear my cry
Over the water
bye and bye
Ole man comin'
down the line
Whip in hand to
beat me down
But I ain't
gonna let him
Turn me 'round

New York: Bantam. p. 184.)

This is a story of physical survival of a black girl, Cassie Logan, in a hostile world; but more importantly, it is the survival of her spirit. Cassie is raised to be independent and to not surrender her identity simply because of her skin color. Living in Mississippi during the Depression Era of the 1930s, where the white man dominates the community and oppresses the blacks financially, socially, and emotionally, Cassie is raised in a protected family environment. It is not until she realizes, through several incidents, the white man's power over her life, that she begins to fight back.

Her family is close and supports each other in their survival of setbacks instigated by the white men. Her father owns their land so the Logans are not subjected to the plight of their friends who are sharecroppers, but Cassie has to watch the suffering of her friends. One of the family friends, in order to gain acceptance, joins with some white boys, only to end up the brunt of their cruelty. Cassie watches this in horror, as she fights to maintain her dignity and self worth as several turbulent incidents turn her protected world upside down.

The poem cited above comes near the end of the novel at the point where Cassie is to learn first hand of the true injustice of her world. Cassie may be beaten, but her spirit is undaunted as she learns to cope with the situation at hand, and continue on living, proud of her people and her color.

Throughout the novel, the importance of friendships and
supportive relationships is interwoven into the two dominating themes of prejudice and survival. It becomes obvious to the reader that in order to live in the Logan's world, a network of support is paramount to the family's survival.

The Newbery Award: A Brief History

This award was established by Frederic G. Melcher of New York in order to annually honor the author of the "most distinguished contribution to American children's literature." In 1921, at the annual American Library Association Conference, Melcher, in order to maintain the strong unity of purpose of the Association and to encourage the continual production of worthwhile literature, proposed this annual award. It was named after John Newbery, as he is credited with creating the first book intended solely for the enjoyment of children. The proposal was accepted with enthusiasm.

The recipient is chosen by the Children's Librarians' Section of the American Library Association. The award is a bronze medal, sculpted by Rene Chambellan of New York. One side is engraved with the figures of an adult and two children to represent a writer giving his talents to the children, and the other side shows a horn book with the inscription: "For The Most Distinguished Contribution To Literature For Children." John Newbery's name is also inscribed, as well as the phrase: "Awarded Annually by the Children's Librarians Section of the American Library Association." This is also made into a seal and is imprinted on the book which inevitably would increase the sales to the satisfaction of the author and the publisher. The book is chosen from the previous year, and must be an original work, not a reprint or compilation. The author must be a citizen or resident of the United States. And finally, the book need not be written solely for children, but the librarians would decide if it was a contribution to the literature of children.

The purpose of the award is to encourage creative and original works in the field of children's literature as well as make the public aware that contributions in this area deserve recognition.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry was the recipient of this distinguished award in 1977, and that is why it was chosen as especially worthy for this project.*

*(Taken from History of the Newbery and Caldecott Medals, Smith, I., New York: Viking Press. 1957. pgs.56-60)
Other books by Mildred Taylor about the Logan family:

**Song of the Trees** (Bantam, 1979)

This story takes place prior to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. The Logan family is suffering from the depression and lack of money. David, Cassie's father, has gone off to Louisiana to work on the railroad for money to feed his family. That is when the trouble starts. Mr. Anderson, a white man, cheats Big Ma, Cassie's grandmother, into selling the old trees in the forest around their house for lumber. Cassie is devastated, as she believes these trees sing to her and are her friends. Mary, Cassie's mother, out of desperation, sends Stacey, Cassie's older brother, to go find David.

Although warned to stay away from the forest where the men are cutting, Cassie, her brothers, Christopher John, and Little Man, wander into the woods to watch. They are so infuriated with the cutting that they begin to protest and physically attack the white men. It seems that the kids are cruelly outnumbered and overpowerd until David shows up. He threatens to blow up the whole forest with dynamite that he and Stacey have buried all around unless the white men leave. The white men back down in the face of David's anger. Once again, the Logan family has maintained their dignity in the face of the white man's injustice.

**Let The Circle Be Unbroken** (Dial, 1981)

This is the sequel to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. The kids are older now and are becoming eager to explore the world outside their own family. Cassie finds a new friend in Wordell, a man of few words, but deep understanding. Suzella, the Logan's cousin, comes to stay with them and endears everyone to her except Cassie. Stacey is beginning to want to prove himself an adult.

It is now 1935 and deep in the Depression. The Logan kids watch as their friend, T.J., is charged with murder by an all white jury; sharecroppers are victimized by the greed of large landowners and are forced to plow up some of their cotton crops. Racial antagonisms are aroused and new conflicts occur, but Big Ma, Mama, and Papa continue to teach the kids the pride and self-respect they need to survive amidst adversity.
The Road to Memphis (Dial, 1990)

This is the third book about the Logan family. Cassie is now 17 years old and is thinking about college and law school. She is unprepared for the backlash against a friend of hers, Moe, after he strikes out against his white tormentors - an action unheard of in Mississippi. It is up to Cassie, her brother, and friends, to accompany Moe to Memphis and to safety. Many incidents of injustice are encountered along the way, as well as some pleasant surprises, that further Cassie's education as to the realities of the world in which she lives.
Author's Biography

Mildred Taylor was born in Jackson, Mississippi. Her childhood was spent in Toledo, Ohio, where she later graduated from the University. As a Peace Corps volunteer, Mildred Taylor was sent to Ethiopia where she was an English and history teacher. She became a recruiter and instructor for the Peace Corps after returning to the United States. She obtained a master's degree at the University of Colorado in the School of Journalism, and as a member of the Black Student Alliance helped to organize a Black Studies program. Ms. Taylor has lived in Los Angeles and Toledo. She was the recipient of the 1977 Newbery Medal Award for Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry (1976). She also wrote about the Logan family in Song of the Trees (1975), Let the Circle Be Unbroken (1981), and The Road to Memphis (1990).*


Additional Reading

PREJUDICE

Angelou, M., I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (Bantam, 1969)
Angelou, M., All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes (Vintage, 1986)
Fox, P., The Slave Dancer (Dell, 1973)
Gordon, S., Waiting for the Rain (Bantam, 1989)
Haley, A., Roots (Dell, 1976)
Hamilton, V., M.C. Higgins, the Great (Dell, 1974)
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(See also Section 6)

**FRIENDSHIP**

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Back, A., **The Meat in the Sandwich** (Dell, 1977)
Byars, B., **The Pinballs** (Harper and Row, 1977)
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Section Two

Historical Setting

ECONOMY

The 1930s was dominated by the stock market crash of 1929. Herbert Hoover was the President at the time, and was on a downhill slide in his popularity toward the end of his presidency in 1933. The economic statistics were grim.

Industrial output was now less than half the 1929 figure. The number of unemployed, although difficult to count accurately, had mounted to something between 13 and 15 million, or a record high of 25 percent of the labor force, and the unemployed had 30 million mouths to feed besides their own. Hourly wages had dropped 60 percent since 1929, white-collar salaries 40 percent. Farmers were getting five cents a pound for cotton and less than 50 cents a bushel for wheat. (Time Life, 1969, p. 23)

These statistics didn't show the starving sellers of apples on the streets, the long lines waiting for soup or bread dispensed by charities, the bloated bellies of hungry children, or the desperate men fighting over the contents of a garbage can. Besides being hungry, many of these people who were welfare recipients, were forbidden to vote, or had to pay poll tax beyond their means.

President Hoover was faced with a hopeless task and took the blame for the Depression. His name became a manifestation for the problem. "Hoover blankets" were simply newspapers used to keep the homeless warm. "Hoover flags" were men's empty pockets turned inside out. Even towns called "Hooverville", which consisted of houses made from cardboard and scrap metal, began to spring up in empty lots.

People who previously only had heard about poverty were now experiencing it. Few were exempt. Negro factory workers, usually last to be hired, were the first to be fired. Farmers, as well as having to deal with financial depression faced natural disasters as well in the form of floods, droughts, plagues and dust storms. Business men lost their homes and wandered the streets. Even the children invented a game called "Eviction" that they acted out with dolls. Sharecroppers drifted trying to find work and food.
Obviously many suffered from hunger, cold, and disease and yet were denied any relief because they were non-residents. Relief finally came in 1933 after the election of a new President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and his New Deal. The government began to take a more humanitarian view of the Depression's effect on individuals and Roosevelt started a new legislation. The government provided $500 million for cash, food, and shelter to the homeless and destitute. He pushed through an emergency banking bill to strengthen the nation's financial system. Fifteen new laws were passed to give jobs to the jobless, support crop prices, repeal Prohibition, stop home foreclosures, insure bank deposits, and more. Somebody was finally taking control, and the people loved and respected him. However by the end of the 1930s, as conditions improved, Roosevelt's critics became more vocal. Yet Roosevelt still continued to make changes and by the end of the decade more people had jobs and the economy was surviving.

**JIM CROW LAWS**

"Jim Crow" laws, named after an obedient, uncomplaining black character from a minstrel show, were also enforced. These laws required "separate but equal" treatment for blacks, meaning separate restrooms, schools, restaurants, and trains for blacks and whites. When these laws were challenged by a black man named Homer Plessy, he was arrested and tried. The Supreme Court decided these laws to be reasonable, and approved a system of segregation that lasted for years. These laws contributed to a violent time of racial hatred.

Blacks also suffered legal oppression. Most of the Southern states passed laws to keep the blacks from voting. These laws kept anyone who could not read or write from voting, or else charged a poll tax that poor blacks could not afford.

**LABOR UNIONS**

By the middle of the 1930s, management and the working man were due for a showdown. Due to the lobbying efforts of John L. Lewis, leader of the United Mine Workers, a law had been passed that every man had the right to join a union and bargain with his boss. However, this was hard to put into practice. On the mild side, a man was fired for talking about the union. More commonly, he would be shot, beaten or killed. Men were hired solely to oversee the workers with the use of machine guns, night sticks, and tear gas.
Eventually fed up, the workers rallied behind John L. Lewis, who had been fighting this union war for 25 years. He formed the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organization). The sit-down strike came into use to force the management to listen. And although many lives were lost on both sides, and the battle raged for years, the worker finally assumed his rightful place as a citizen of the United States.*

*(Taken from Time Life Books. This Fabulous Century: Sixty Years of American Life. New York: Time Life. 1969 pgs. 23-26, 162-169)

ENTERTAINMENT

Although so many people were drowning in poverty, show business continued to grow. Listed below are some of the popular acts and people that kept the nation entertained and fascinated during the Depression Era.

Radio Shows
Amos 'n' Andy, Jack Benny and Fred Allen, Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen

Heroes and Heroines
Little Orphan Annie, Flash Gordon, Jack Armstrong, Tarzan, Tom Mix, Buck Rogers, Dick Tracy, Shirley Temple

Crooks, Mobsters, and Gangsters
John Dillinger, Lester M. Gillis, Machine Gun Kelly, "Pretty Boy" Floyd, "Ma" Barker and her boys, Bonnie and Clyde

Cops/FBI
J. Edgar Hoover

Movie Stars
Jean Harlow, Clark Gable, Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper, Bette Davis, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Eleanor Powell

Comedians
Mae West, W.C. Fields, Carole Lombard, John Barrymore, Myrna Loy, William Powell, The Marx Brothers

Movies
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Gone With The Wind

Music
Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Tommy Dorsey, Bob Crosby, Glenn Miller, Count Basie, Jimmy Dorsey, Harry James, Jimmie Lunceford, Duke Ellington, Martha Tilton, Helen O'Connell,
Billie Holiday, Mildred Bailey, Marion Hutton, Ella Fitzgerald*


(Note: These topics would make excellent extra credit reports to be used as in introduction to the time period of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry.*)

To obtain more detailed information an excellent source is the Time Life series called: *This Fabulous Century: Sixty Years of American Life.* 1930, 1940 Volume IV.
These next three sections take the student "Through" the novel with a summary of the chapters, vocabulary words, and comprehension discussion questions to help the students gain meaning from what they are reading. Literary devices and the structure of the novel are discussed as these elements fall from the literature during the reading. Teachers will need to make instructional choices as to when to discuss these specific concepts.

Section Three is a chronological lesson plan that proceeds through the book, chapter by chapter. Section Four discusses a variety to literary devices used by the author. Section Five deals with the essential parts of a novel.
Summary

The novel opens with the Logan family, Stacey, Cassie, Christopher John, Little Man, and two of their friends, T.J. and Claude Avery, walking to school. There is a discussion of the burning of a black family by some white men. The first obvious illustration of inequality among the school children is the daily occurrence of the white children's bus covering them with dust as it rushes past. Cassie's character begins to emerge as she almost immediately receives a reprimand from Mrs. Crocker, her teacher in the all black school, for daydreaming in class. The students are informed that they will have books this year, but as Mrs. Crocker passes them out, after Little Man opens the cover, he throws his on the floor and stomps on it. Cassie quickly looks to see what caused this outburst and sees that the books are stamped by each preceding white owner until it gets to the bottom where it states the condition of the book as "very poor" and the owner as "nigra". Cassie stands up for Little Man, which results in a whipping for both of them. Mrs. Crocker insists that they learn to accept who they are, but when she informs Cassie's mother, Mary, who also teaches at the school, Mary simply pastes a piece of paper over the stamps in her students' books. Mary is not pleased at the children's reactions; however, she understands their motivation and emphasizes with them.

The scene moves to everybody picking cotton when David, Cassie's father, comes home from his seasonal job of working on the railroad. The Logan family owns their own land and so are not subject to the authority of the white landowners, unlike most of their friends. The reader is also introduced to Big Ma, David's mother, who lives with them. David has brought home a guest, Mr. Morrison, who will be living with them also. David says he is there to help with the work load, but the family understands it is also for protection while David is away.

It is mentioned that John Berry dies as a result of the
burnings. David is furious at the injustices and the inability to prosecute as the burning was done by whites, the Wallaces. David decides not to shop at the Wallace's store anymore, and warns the kids against going close to the place.

Vocabulary

1. meticulous: adj. very careful or too careful about details; scrupulous or finicky (p.1)
2. plantation: n. an estate in a warm climate, with crops cultivated by workers living on it (p.3)
3. undaunted: adj. not daunted; fearless, not disheartened (p.5)
4. sharecropped: v. to work land for a share of the crop (p.5)
5. flounced: v. to move with quick, flinging motions of the body as in anger (p.11)
6. motley: adj. of many colors (p.15)
7. temerity: n. foolish or rash boldness (p.16)
8. maverick: n. (Colloq.) a person who acts independently of any organization or political party (p.22)
9. formidable: adj. causing dread, fear, or awe (p.25)
10. ebony: adj. black (p.25)

Discussion Questions

1. When the students are given books that are clearly inferior to what the white kids use, why does Little Man react so violently? Can you think of a situation where you felt you were being treated unfairly, and yet were helpless to do anything about it?

2. One of Stacey's friends, Moe Turner, walks 3 1/2 hours to school each day. Why is education so important to him? How far would you go to get an education?

3. Cassie's school had two grade levels in the same room, was heated by a pot bellied stove, did not have bus transportation, and usually had no books. Discuss the kind of education one would receive in such a deprived environment. What kinds or services or materials does your school provide that are often taken for granted? What would school be like without any books, paper, writing utensils, films, etc.?
4. When Cassie showed her teacher the insults printed on the inside of the cover of their books, Mrs. Crocker's only response was, "That's what you are, now go sit down." Cassie realized that Mrs. Crocker "had looked at the page and had understood nothing." What is it that Mrs. Crocker had not understood? When Mary was confronted by the children's behavior and accused of not telling her kids about how the real world would treat them, she replied, "Maybe so, but that doesn't mean they have to accept them (the treatment)...and maybe we don't either." What is Mary suggesting? Is there a difference between "knowing" something, as opposed to "accepting" it?

5. The Berry family was burned by a white family. It is common knowledge who did it, but nobody is able to prosecute, because in court, blacks don't stand a chance against whites. What kind of community would allow this type of behavior? Can you think of injustices that take place at school based on a student's looks, personality, or clothes? Do the more popular students get away with actions that the less popular students couldn't? Why does this "double-standard" exist?
Chapters 3 and 4

Summary

The season has moved to the end of October, and the kids are walking to school in the rain. The white children's bus makes a repeat performance, splashing them thoroughly, covering them in mud. The Logans decided it is time for revenge, and during lunch the next day, they grab shovels and buckets and dig a ditch in the daily path of the bus. The rain continues to fall, creating an unexpected chasm where the kids had dug. After school, the Logans make sure they are on the scene to witness the impending disaster, and to their delight, the bus speeds up through the ditch, and screeches to a halt with a broken axle. The Logans are pleased to see that the white kids all have to walk home in the mud and rain.

That evening, Mr. Avery, comes to their house to warn them of the "night men", white men who travel in a group to take into their own hands the law, usually to the detriment of the blacks. The kids are immediately put to bed with Mary and Big Ma sitting guard with rifles at the windows. Cassie, awakes and finding herself alone in bed, sneaks out to the front porch and fearfully witnesses the arrival and the departure of the "night men" in their front yard. Cassie becomes physically ill, due to the extreme fear she experienced from seeing the "night men". T.J. later informs the Logan kids that the "night men" tarred and feathered a black man who was accused of making a pass at a white woman.

A few days later, Stacey is caught by his mother with cheat notes during a test. Stacey is whipped because he refuses to tell on T.J., who put the notes on Stacey's seat so as not to be caught with them. Stacey chases T.J. after school and catches him at the forbidden Wallace store. The two boys are fighting when Mr. Morrison breaks them up, and takes home all the children. Stacey confesses where he has been to Mary and she takes the kids to visit the Berrys so they can see what the Wallace men did to their family. Mr. Berry is so badly burned, they have a hard time looking at him. Mary's point is not lost on the kids and on the way home she talks to neighbors about the boycott of the Wallace store.

In this chapter, Cassie is told the history of Logan land by Big Ma, and why it is so important to hold on to the land.
Vocabulary

1. resiliency: adj. recovering strength, or spirits, quickly (p.31)
2. emitted: v. sent out, discharged (p.31)
3. gloat: v. grin scornfully, to gaze or think with malicious pleasure (p.43)
4. caravan: n. a company of people traveling together for safety (p.49)
5. feigned: v. to make up, pretend (p.56)
6. aloof: adj. cool and reserved (p.58)
7. engrossed: v. to take the entire attention of; occupy wholly (p.64)
8. vex: v. to disturb or annoy (p.71)
9. fathom: v. to understand thoroughly (p.72)
10. patronize: v. to be a regular customer of (p.74)

Discussion Questions

1. When the Logan kids were walking to school and they were completely soaked and muddy, Mildred Taylor, speaking through Cassie's voice says, "We consequently found ourselves comical objects to cruel eyes that gave no thought to our misery." What does this mean? Whose eyes were "cruel"? Can you think of a time when you were the victim of a similar situation? How did that make you feel? Have you ever been the owner of the "cruel eyes"? How do you think the other person felt?

2. You have met Jeremy Simms several times so far. He is one white kid who refuses to ride the bus. He also breaches a common law, and tries to maintain a friendship with the Logans, against the will of his family and community. Why would somebody take a risk like that? Is Jeremy a true friend? What do you think motivates Jeremy to pursue this friendship? How much risk are you willing to take to make friends?

3. When the Logan kids dig the ditch, they were out for revenge. What they did had the potential to be dangerous to the driver and the passengers. Is there such a thing as "justifiable revenge"? When is it permissible to take revenge, and how far can you go before it is no longer "okay"?

4. When Cassie saw the "night men," she experience a fear for her life so profound that she became physically ill. Have you ever felt ill from fear? Have you ever been afraid for your life? How did it make you feel? How did you overcome
this fear, or did you?

5. When Mary and the kids are returning from the visit to the Berrys, she stops and talks to Mr. Turner about shopping somewhere else besides the Wallace Store. Mr. Wallace says he can't because he has no actual cash and has to buy everything on credit. Read the last paragraph on page 75. How does this system of credit keep the blacks under the white man's control? Is it a fair system? How is it a benefit to the poor black man?
Chapters 5 and 6

Summary

Stacey, Cassie, and T.J. go to the market in Strawberry with Big Ma to sell some produce. This is Cassie's first visit to the large town and she is awed by all the people. Cassie doesn't understand why Big Ma doesn't move to the front, until Big Ma explains that the white people are in front. After they eat, Big Ma goes to visit Mr. Jamison and tells the kids to stay in the wagon.

T.J. convinces Cassie and Stacey to go into Barnett's store to finish the shopping for Big Ma. Cassie becomes angry when Mr. Barnett stops helping them to serve a white woman. Cassie verbally protests; Mr. Barnett publically humiliates her and throws her out of the store. Cassie then bumps into Lillian Jean Simms, who tells Cassie to walk in the street and to apologize for bumping into her. Cassie refuses and consequently is pushed down in the street by Mr. Simms as he demands an apology. Cassie, frightened and embarrassed, gets up and runs into Big Ma's arms, only to have Big Ma make her apologize. Cassie is confused and hurt as she feels Big Ma didn't stand up for her. Upon returning home, Cassie tells of her visit to Strawberry to Uncle Hammer, who becomes furious and jumps into his car to seek revenge. Mr. Morrison joins him to prevent Hammer from acting rashly.

That night, Mary tries to explain to Cassie the way of things as a black person. Cassie still doesn’t understand.

The next morning, Uncle Hammer gives Stacey a brand new wool coat. At church, T.J. makes fun of Stacey and calls him a "preacher". On the way home, in Uncle Hammer's new Packard, they face the Wallaces on a bridge and the Wallaces back down thinking it is Mr. Granger driving. They are humiliated when they realize that it is Hammer, and Mary fears retribution because of Hammer's impulsive behavior.

Vocabulary

1. teeming: v. abound or swarm (p.79)
2. bland: adj. gently agreeable (p.83)
3. malevolently: adv. malicious, wishing evil or harm to others (p.85)
4. mutely: adv. not speaking, silent (p.91)
5. ominously: adv. of or serving as an evil omen, threatening (p.94)
6. reprimand: n. a severe or formal rebuke (p.94)
7. **chignon**: *n.* a coil of hair worn at the back of the neck by women (p. 98)  
8. **engulfed**: *v.* to swallow up (p. 102)  
9. **languidly**: *adv.* listless, indifferent (p. 104)  
10. **gape**: *v.* to stare with the mouth open (p. 105)

**Discussion Questions**

1. When Stacey, Cassie, and T.J. were in Mr. Barnett's store, T.J. shows them a pearl-handled gun that he wants. He says, "I'd sell my life for that gun. I get me that gun and ain't nobody gonna mess with me. I wouldn't need nobody." What does this tell you about T.J.'s attitude? How does this differ from Big Ma's attitude? Is there anything that you would "sell your life" for? How high of a price would you be willing to pay for something you really wanted?

2. The incident with Lillian Jean was a real shock to Cassie and was really the first time she had suffered overt humiliation at the hands of a white person. Part of Cassie's shock was at the realization that she couldn't win this battle, and would just have to accept it. What do you think would have happened if Cassie had refused to apologize? Think of a time in your life when you realized how helpless you were to do anything to change reality. How did it feel? Did you accept it, or fight it?

3. When Mama tries to explain why Big Ma reacted the way she did in Strawberry, she says, "White people may demand our respect, but what we give them is not respect but fear. What we give to our own people is far more important because it's given freely." What does this mean? Do you agree? What is the difference between "fear" and "respect"?
Chapters 7 & 8

Summary

The family is sitting around one evening, and Mary asks Stacey to bring her his new wool coat as she wants to alter it to make it fit better. He ends up admitting that T.J. has it because T.J. said it fit him better. Uncle Hammer is angry, and says if Stacey doesn't know when he is being make a fool of, then he doesn't deserve the coat.

The family celebrates Christmas together until they are interrupted by Jeremy Simms who brings a gift for Stacey. The situation is uncomfortable and after Jeremy leaves, Pa warns Stacey about having white boys for friends.

Mr. Jamison visits, and helps Big Ma sign over her land rights to David and Hammer. Jamison offers to back their credit in Vicksburg, yet warns of the wrath of Mr. Granger. Mr. Granger comes to threaten them about shopping in Vicksburg, and says he can call their mortgage, raise prices at the Wallace store, and eventually get the Logan land back.

Cassie plots and carries out her revenge on Lillian Jean. She pretends to be her friend, and to have finally recognized her "place". Lillian tells Cassie all sorts of inside secrets, and then Cassie beats her up, threatening to spread Lillian's secrets if she tells.

T.J. is caught cheating again by Mary, and cursing the Logan family, goes to the Wallace store. Soon after that several school board members show up and fire Mary for teaching material that is not in the text books. T.J. confesses to telling on Mary out of revenge, and consequently is ignored by all his classmates. This is a turning point for T.J. as he has lost acceptance by his friends, and goes to seek it elsewhere.

Vocabulary

1. interminable: adj. lasting, or seeming to last forever; endless (p.109)
2. placid: adj. calm and quiet (p.121)
3. eviction: n. removal (p.123)
4. condoned: v. forgave or overlooked (p.127)
5. feigned: v. pretended (p.132)
6. sauntered: v. walked about idly, strolled (p.136)
7. shunned: v. kept away from, avoided (p.145)
Discussion Questions

1. When Mr. Jamison visits the Logan family, he talks of the danger of the boycott. He says it is pointing a finger at the Wallaces for the murder of Mr. Berry. The murder itself is not the problem because the victim was black, but the fact that the Logans want the murderers punished the same as if they had killed a white man creates the problem. This would say that a black man is equal to a white man, and that is what Mr. Granger would not tolerate. Think about our criminal justice system. Do you think it is prejudice? Does it punish people differently for the same crimes? Think about Rodney King and Reginald Denny. Were they treated the same?

2. After the discussion with Mr. Jamison about the dangers of the boycott, David says, "Still, I want these children to know we tried, and what we can't do now, maybe one day they will." The Logan family is fighting seemingly impossible odds. Why is this so important to David? Is he just being stubborn? Do you think it is worth it to fight something that you know you can't win? When is trying more important than winning?

3. As Cassie is learning how to adjust to this prejudice society, Papa tells her, "Cassie, there'll be a whole lot of things you ain't gonna wanna do but you'll have to do in this life just so you can survive." What things are he talking about? We all need to adapt to survive in this world. What are some things you don't want to do, but have to in order to survive?

4. Mary Logan, as a teacher, teaches what she believes the students need to know, especially about their black heritage. Often this information is not included in the text books chosen by the "white" school board. Mary lost her job over standing up for what she believed in. Was this too much risk for her to take, especially since they needed the money so badly? Do you think Mary was right or wrong? Why? What is something you believe strongly in? Does it "cost" you anything to stand up for this belief? How far would you be willing to go to defend this belief?

5. When Stacey finds out that T.J. is responsible for the firing of his mother, he doesn't beat him up, but says, "What he got coming to him is worse than a beating." Do you agree? What is worse, physical pain or mental pain? Why? What would you have done if you were Stacey? Have you ever had a friend betray your trust? How did you react?
Chapters 9 & 10

Summary

Spring arrives, and with it a pack of trouble. The kids learn of T.J.'s association with R.W. and Melvin Simms and the white boys' patronizing treatment of T.J..

Mr. Avery and Mr. Lanier pull out of the boycott as the landowners raised the percentage owed to them and threatened to send the two men to the chain gang. Papa, Mr. Morrison, and Stacey go to Vicksburg and are very late getting home. They are attacked on the road by three of the Wallace men. David's leg is run over by the wagon and broken, and he receives a flesh wound in the head by gunshot. Mr. Morrison breaks one of the Wallace men's arms, and the back of another. Stacey is very shook up.

David stays home a while to heal, and becomes very frustrated and angry at their lack of money and his helplessness to do anything about it. Mr. Morrison has another confrontation with Kaleb Wallace, and Mary begins to fear for Morrison's safety.

Because of the trouble they are causing, Mr. Granger uses his contacts at the bank to have the Logan's balance due on their mortgage loan. David calls Hammer, who sells his car to come up with the money.

A church revival is beginning, and T.J. shows up with R.W. and Melvin to try and impress his friends, but he is ignored. T.J. feels rejected again, and turns to his "new" friends for acceptance.

Vocabulary

1. persnickety: adj. too particular, fussy (p.149)
2. summon: v. to call together (p.152)
3. resigned: adj. submission (p.153)
4. amenities: n. courteous acts (p.154)
5. skittish: adj. easily frightened; jumpy (p.162)
6. feat: n. a deed of unusual daring or skill (p.170)
7. ambled: v. walked in a leisurely way (p.172)
8. smirk: n. a smile given in a conceited or complacent way (p.182)

Discussion Questions

1. T.J. and Stacey have been friends for years. Several times T.J. has pushed that friendship to the limit by getting
Stacey into trouble, telling on Mary Logan, and by a generally haughty attitude. What kind of friend is T.J. to Stacey and vice versa? What makes a good friend? Is loyalty more important than kindness? What kind of friend are you?

2. The Logan family has suffered innumerable times at the hands of the whites. David is talking to Cassie about a lone little fig tree, that just keeps on blooming and growing even though it is so overshadowed by other trees. David says, "Just keeps on growing and doing what it gotta do. It don't give up. It give up, it'll die. There's a lesson to be learned from that little tree, Cassie girl, 'cause we're like it. We keep doing what we gotta, and we don't give up. We can't." Why can't David give up? What would happen if he did? Think of a time when you refused to give up. Did it make a difference?

3. Mary is concerned for Mr. Morrison's safety and suggests that maybe he needs to leave town. What is Mr. Morrison's response? What is more important to him than his own personal safety? What is more important to you than your own personal safety?

4. After T.J. introduced R.W. and Melvin to his friends at the revival and they didn't respond the way he had hoped, T.J. mutters, "It-it didn't even make no difference." What does he mean? What "difference" is he trying to make? Why do you think T.J. is so blind to the way he is being treated by R.W. and Melvin? Which group of friends does T.J. really want to be with?
Summary

The Logan family is all asleep when T.J. comes quietly knocking on Stacey's outside bedroom door. He is quite injured and can hardly tell his story. He describes how R.W. and Melvin were going to get him the pearl handled gun, but Mr. Barnett's store was closed. The Simms boys convinced T.J. that it would be okay to break in and take it, saying they would pay for it tomorrow. T.J. is pushed through a window too big for either white boy, and unlocks the front door. When they get inside, R.W. and Melvin break the lock on the gun case for T.J. and then proceed to try and open the store's safe. It is at this point that T.J. realizes what is happening, but it is too late. Mr. Barnett hears noise and comes down stairs with a flashlight. He realizes what is happening and begins to wrestle with Melvin for the cash box. R.W. then hits him on the head with an axe, and Mr. Barnett slumps to the floor. Then Mrs. Barnett comes down, sees the two white boys with stockings over their heads, and accuses the "niggers" of killing Mr. Barnett. R.W. slaps her and she falls, hitting her head on one of the stoves and is motionless. When they left, T.J. wanted to go straight home, but the Simms boys had other plans and beat T.J. when he threatened to tell the truth. T.J., after a couple of hours, was able to crawl to the Logan's house to ask Stacey to help him get home. Stacey wasn't sure if T.J. was lying or not, but agreed to help him home. The rest of the kids followed along.

As the Logan kids watch T.J. crawl through a window in his own house, several cars pull up into the driveway. R.W. and Melvin, plus several other white men pound on the Avery's door and demand T.J. to come out. The entire Avery family is dragged outside and T.J. is grabbed and the men plan on hanging him. Another man find the stolen gun in T.J.'s room. The Logan kids are hidden and are watching in horror, when Mr. Jamison and the sheriff pull up and try to unsuccessfully stop the lynching. At this point, Stacey sends the three younger kids back to get Pa and Mr. Morrison for help.

Cassie tells what is happening, and Pa and Mr. Morrison rush out of the house with guns. But suddenly a fire starts in the cotton fields and distracts the lynching mob as Mr. Granger demands that they all fight the fire together. The blacks and the whites labor together to put out the fire and are finally saved by rainfall.

T.J. is taken to jail in Strawberry with Mr. Jamison. Mr. Barnett dies that night, and Pa tells Mr. Jamison that he
wants to go into town to comfort the Avery family. Mr. Jamison advises David to lay low for awhile and let people believe the fire started by lightning. This is when Cassie realizes that Papa started the fire.

David informs Cassie and Stacey of T.J.'s predicament, implying that he could hang for murder. Stacey takes it very hard as reality sets in. Cassie, on the other hand, is still confused as to the injustices against blacks and is unable to accept T.J.'s helplessness to fight against a white jury, judge, and witnesses.

Vocabulary

1. **despicable**: adj. deserving scorn; contemptible (p.189)
2. **vulnerability**: adj, openness to, or easily hurt by, criticism or attack (p.189)
3. **akimbo**: adj, with hands on hips and elbows bent outward (p.191)
4. **placid**: adj. calm; quiet (p.193)
5. **traipsing**: v. to walk or wander (p.197)
6. **adamant**: adj. inflexible; unyielding (p.203)
7. **wan**: adj. sickly pale (p.210)

Discussion questions

1. After all that T.J. has done to hurt Stacey, why do you think Stacey agrees to help him this last time? Does Stacey recognize the value of true friendship? Why do you think T.J. turned to Stacey for help? If you were Stacey, would you have done the same? What would you have done differently?

2. When the fire broke out, both black and white struggled to fight it before it burned all the cotton and houses on Granger's land. Why do you think it takes an emergency or tragedy to overcome prejudice? What do you think it would take to remove the prejudice in society today? Do you think it is possible? After the fire, do think any attitudes of the blacks or white were different toward each other? Why or why not?

3. Do you think Stacey has grown up during this novel? Why or why not? How have his attitudes changed? What caused these changes? What about Cassie? Is there a change in her maturity? Why or why not?
Section Four

Literary Devices

[See p. 39 for how to use Section 4.]

The Simile

The simile is one of the easiest ways to create a better mental image. Compare A with B, using the word like or as, and you have a simile. She is as red as a rose. He sleeps like a log. Notice that the two objects are not similar except for one aspect. The girl and the rose are very different except they share the blushing quality. The sleeping boy and log are very different but they share lack of movement. Similes are commonly used everyday. How would you fill out the following sentences:

Max swims like a ________.
Her dress was as white as ________.
Mary Lou was as strong as an ________.

You want to try and avoid these common ones, and search for the uncommon or unexpected. A good simile will do more than describe and clarify, it will add a new dimension, something to spark the imagination.*

*(Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications. 1977, p.118)

Mildred Taylor makes use of similes in her novel.

In the first chapter, she describes Little Man as he watched the bus race toward him "spewing clouds of red dust like a huge yellow dragon breathing fire."

When Cassie is watching the night men come, Taylor describes the lights on the car as they drive away as "seven pairs of rear lights glowing like distant red embers."

When T.J. goes with Big Ma, Stacey, and Cassie to Strawberry one morning, T.J. was "chattering like a cockatoo."

When Papa is explaining the importance of their land to Cassie, he looked up at the "trees standing like sentinels on
the edge of the hollow."

In each simile above, what two things are being compared? What is it they have in common?

Now let's try some of your own. Start with an ordinary substance: a scouring pad, or powder, or relish. Choose a universal: love, or grief, or anger. Ponder one characteristic shared by the universal and the ordinary substance. Then try and combine them:

"Love, like a brand-new scouring pad, makes our lives shine."

Try to combine the following:

Life; a stone-wall:________________________________________________________

Wind; flat blade of ice:____________________________________________________

Anger; a school desk:_____________________________________________________

*(Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications. 1977, p.118)

Now try three of your own:

1.______________________________________________________________

2.______________________________________________________________

3.______________________________________________________________
Metaphors

The metaphor, like the simile, compares two objects; unlike the simile, it does not use like or as.

simile: Her teeth are like pearls.
metaphor: Her teeth are pearls.

Just as there are common similes, there are common metaphors such as "He is a pig", or "She is a toothpick". These are too common to be effective, but a good metaphor says a great deal in a few words.

Herman Melville once wrote: "A whale ship was my Yale College and my Harvard." Reading that, one realizes that real education can be gained anywhere - that the lessons learned on a whaling ship can be more valuable than an advanced degree from an Ivy League college.*

*(Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications. 1977, p.119)

Study the metaphors that Mildred Taylor used. Underline the two objects being compared, and tell why the metaphor is effective.

1. In describing Mr. Morrison for the first time, she says, "The man was a human tree in height, towering high above Papa's six feet two inches.

2. After Cassie's first trip to Strawberry, "Jack pulled into our own yard, the night was a thick blackness and smelled of a coming rain."

3. In describing Spring, Taylor says it was everywhere, "in the barn where three new calves bellowed and chicks the color of soft pale sunlight chirped."

72
Now try to write some of your own. Remember to stretch for the uncommon and unexpected.

1. 

2. 

3. 

73
Personification

Personification creates a different kind of imagery. It gives a non-living object human characteristics: for example, "Bright April shakes out her rain-drenched hair." April (the month) could hardly shake her (nonexistent) hair; but the personification combines the brightness and raininess of April with the kicking youthfulness of early spring. So it is effective.

In the Red Badge of Courage, Stephen Crane used personification heavily. Young Fleming saw the approaching shells as having "rows of cruel teeth that grinned at him"; the cannon "grunted and grumbled"; and the disturbed trees "waved their arms".*

*(Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications. 1977, p.121)

Now read how effectively Mildred Taylor creates images with the use of personification.

After the Logan kids had dug the hole for the bus to fall in, "the bus careened drunkenly into our trap. Then it sputtered a last murmuring protest and died."

"The Barnett Mercantile had everything. Its shelves, counters, and floor space boasted items from ladies' ribbons to burlap bags of seeds."

As the stores gave way to houses still sleeping, we turned onto a dirt road."

"In the ripening fields the drying cotton and corn stretched tiredly skyward awaiting the coolness of a rain that occasionally threatened but did not come."

Now try some of your own. Here is a situation to start you off. You are alone in your living room and no one else is in the house. It is 1:30 a.m. and there is no moon. Rain is falling hard, and suddenly you hear a rustling at the front door and, as you watch, the doorknob begins to turn. Describe that moment, using personification as skillfully as you can.
The Flashback

A flashback is a scene inserted into a story showing events that occurred in the past. Usually the events in a story are arranged chronologically; that is, the order in which the events occurred in time is the order in which they appear in the story. Sometimes, however, the author might want to show something that happened at an earlier time than the events of the story. To do so, the author uses a flashback.

Sometimes, all that is needed is one sentence to introduce the time change. When Big Ma was talking to Cassie about how she first acquired their land, she says, "You know, I...I wasn't hardly eighteen when Paul Edward married me and brung me here." This effectively transports the reader back to the time when Ms. Caroline first saw the Logan land. She then goes on to relate the story to Cassie.

When T.J. shows up at the Logan's, injured after the robbery, there is another flashback introduced with just one line. It says, "Then he (T.J.) told his story." Following that, the reader is taken back in time to the robbery and the details as told by T.J.

Now try some of your own. Using the given prompts, create a brief finish to the flashback.

1. Sarah is old and poor. She decides to plant tomatoes and a few vegetables to eat. She has never planted a real garden before, but once, years ago, she had tried her hand at gardening...

2. Jim was looking at his field and the crops that were being ruined by the weather. It was raining—just as it had been raining twenty years ago when...

*(Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications. 1977, p.415)
Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is the use of clues that suggest events that have yet to occur. It creates suspense by making the reader wonder what will happen next. It is a means of linking seemingly minor or unconnected details with important developments later in a work.

When Mildred Taylor writes about T.J.’s feelings about the pearl handled gun in Barnett’s mercantile, T.J. says, “I’d sell my life for that gun. I get me that gun and ain’t nobody gonna mess with me. I wouldn’t need nobody.” Because of T.J.’s personality, this is an indication of trouble to come because he wants that gun so badly. We find out in the end that he does “sell his life” as he becomes involved in a murder and goes to jail, which in a sense is the end of his life as he knew it.

Cassie is still angry about the humiliation suffered in Strawberry at the hands of Lillian Jean. She “befriends” Lillian, while at the same time plotting revenge. When Cassie sees Lillian Jean appear, she “sighed thankfully that only Jeremy was with her; it could be today for sure.” As the reader, you don’t know what Cassie has planned, but that one line creates enough suspense to make the reader keep reading to find out just how it is Cassie plans to get her revenge.

Now try to think of some lines that would be an indication of something to come. Make sure that you don’t give too much away, but just enough to peak the curiosity of the reader. 

Example: If John had known what kind of day it was going to be, he would have stayed in bed.

1. ______________________________________

2. ______________________________________

3. ______________________________________
Descriptive Writing

A detail tells a rat from a rabbit, defines a giraffe, profiles an elephant.
A detail is a fingerprint of the character, making it specific, and different, and unique.
A detail may evoke a face, or a forest, or a fragrance.
It may even evoke an idea.
Details are as plentiful as grains of sand on a beach, as varied as apples picked in the same orchard, as colorful as tumbling leaves in October.

You have five windows on the world - five senses that can help you to know the world and to understand it. Writers need to train themselves to use these senses. Here is a quiz to see how "sense" sensitive you are.

**Sight**

1. Whose picture is on the one-dollar bill? ___________
2. What color are the walls of the school cafeteria?_____
3. Most pencils are not quite round. How many sides do they have?_____

**Hearing**

For about two minutes sit very quietly and listen. Listen intently to sounds within the classroom and to sounds in the hall or outside the building. List all the sounds you hear.

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Force yourself to become more specific. Describe in a few words the sound of each of the following bells:
School bell_____________________________________
Church bell_____________________________________
Your Door bell_____________________________________
A Telephone bell(ring)*___________________________

*(Taken from *Writing Creatively*, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications. 1977, p.80)
*Smell*
Some psychologists claim that the sense of smell, more than any other sense, is likely to evoke long-ago memories. Go back into your memory. What smells remind you of

a spring day

a garage

Thanksgiving Day

*Taste*
Your sense of taste may be rather primitive, or it may be very sophisticated. Wineries employ professional tasters to assure that taste quality is high and uniform. As a writer you need to be aware of tastes.

Eat or drink three different foods. After each tasting describe the experience in as much detail as possible. Do not name the food, or give a physical description. Swap lists with a friend and see if they can guess what food is being described.

(Ex. bland and cool to the tongue, soft and smooth, with a rich sweetness: ice-cream)*

1.

2.

3.

*(Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications. 1977, pgs.83-84)*
Touch
If you have ever tried to "read" Braille, you know how clumsy and inept most of us are with the sense of touch. Yet the potential is there. Our fingertips are full of nerve endings and are incredibly sensitive.

Touch three things with distinctly different surfaces: sandpaper, velvet, porcelain, unfinished wood. Caress it with your fingertips, lightly and gently. Press hard on it. Try touching it with your cheek, your nose. Make detailed notations before moving on to the second object.*

1. ____________________________

2. ____________________________

3. ____________________________

*(Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications. 1977, pgs.86-88)

Now lets read how Mildred Taylor used specific details to help the reader "see" what she was describing.

Little Man

"My youngest brother paid no attention to me. Grasping more firmly his newspaper-wrapper notebook and his tin-can lunch of cornbread and oil sausages, he continued to concentrate on the dusty road. He lagged several feet behind...attempting to keep the rusty Mississippi dust from swelling with each step and drifting back upon his shiny black shoes and the cuffs of his corduroy pants by lifting each foot high before setting it gently down again. Always meticulously neat, six-year-old Little Man never allowed dirt or tears or stains to mar anything he owned." (p. 1)

A description of the living area of Cassie's house

"It was a warm comfortable room of doors and wood and pictures. From it a person could reach the front or the side porch, the kitchen, and the two other bedrooms. Its walls were made of smooth oak, and on them hung gigantic
Now try some of your own. Pay close attention to the five senses and carefully choose which ones would make it easier for the reader to "see" what you are describing. Here are two prompts to get you started.

1. Describe your bedroom to a complete stranger. Pay attention to details that you usually don't see because you are in it everyday. Think about the smells, the textures, and any tastes that would make your description come alive.

2. Describe your best friend to someone who has never met him or her. Take into account all the five senses and make your "verbal picture" easy to see. Sometimes inconsequential details are the most telling.
The Setting

The setting of a novel consists of the time and place of the action. The time includes not only the historical period, (past, present, future), but also the year, the season, the time of day, and even the weather. The place may be a specific country, state, region, community, neighborhood, building, institution, or home. Details such as dialects, clothing, customs, and modes of transportation are often used to establish setting. In most novels, the setting acts as a backdrop in which the characters act out the plot. The setting is also a key element in determining the mood or feeling of the story. Because the setting is so important to the overall novel, it must be written carefully and thoughtfully with enough detail to make it become a real place in the mind of the reader.

There are two parts to the setting that need to be addressed: the point of view, and the mood.

Point of View
Depending on who is describing a place, it could be very different. Think about your bedroom. Make some quick objective notes about what is in it. Just list the objects, pretending that you are simply taking an inventory.*

* (Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications, 1977, p.426)
Now think about your room from your point of view. What is the focal point, or most important aspect of your room? Maybe it is your bed because you are tired all the time. Maybe it is your computer because you are aspiring to be a writer. Write a paragraph describing your room as you see it.


Now pretend you are your mother. Would she notice the dirty clothes on the floor first? How would she describe your room?


Now describe your room from the point of view of a two-year-old. A two-year-old is about 2 feet tall and loves to touch and handle everything. What would attract his attention first?*


So now you see that you really have several different rooms, it just depends on the point of view.

*(Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications, 1977, p.428)
Mood
Your room can also change according to your mood.

You've had a terrible day at school. As soon as you get home, your mother screams at you because you forgot to take out the trash. You run to your room and slam the door. Describe your room as a haven or refuge from people.

This time you're angry. Your parents rejected your idea of going cross-country on your bike with your friends. They wouldn't even discuss it. You go to your room and feel like a caged animal. Describe your room as a cage or a prison.*

*(Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications, 1977, p.428-429)

Depending on the storyline, the mood can really make a difference in the overall affect of the novel on the reader.
Now think about *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, and answer the following questions.

1. What is the time period of the novel?

2. Why is the time such an important factor to the effectiveness of the story?

3. How would this novel be different if it took place in the 1980's?

4. Where does the story take place?

5. How would the story be changed if it took place in the desert, or downtown L.A.?

6. What do you think is the overall mood or feeling in the story? How does the author create that feeling?

7. There are several emotional scenes in the book. Choose three of varying moods and briefly describe them and show how the author uses the setting and characters to help establish the mood.

8. From whose point of view is the story being told?

9. How would the story differ if it was told by T.J., or Melvin Simms?
Characters

The characters in a story are the people or animals who take part in the action of a literary work. The main character, or the protagonist, is the most important character and the focus of the reader's attention. Often the protagonist goes through a significant change throughout the course of the novel. A minor character takes part in the action, but isn't the main focus, and often helps the reader learn about the main character.

Fictional characters are also described as round or flat characters. A round character is fully developed. The writer reveals his background, personality traits (both good and bad), and what he is thinking. The reader should know the character so well that it is almost possible to predict how he will react in a situation.

A flat character, on the other hand, only seems to possess one or two personality traits, and no personal history is revealed.

There are also several ways that an author can choose to reveal a character's personality. The reader learns about a character by his physical looks, how he talks, walks, thinks, and any unique expressions, gestures, or habit he may have. A character is also made known through the eyes of other people and how they respond to him, what they say about him, and how they talk to him. Use of all these devices lead to a well known and developed character.

Think about *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Answer the following questions.

1. Who is the protagonist?

2. How does the author develop Cassie's personality? Go through the book and find five instances that give the reader a special insight into her characteristics.

3. List five flat characters and write what you know about them.

4. Does Cassie go through any significant changes throughout the novel? Be specific and be ready to defend your answer.
Plot

The plot is the sequence of events in a novel. In most novels, the plot involves the characters in some type of conflict.

There are several stages of a plot:

**exposition**: establishes the setting, identifies the major characters, and introduces the basic situation.

**inciting incident**: introduces the central conflict

**rising action**: all the events that happen after the introduction of the conflict; shows the development of the conflict and how it affects the characters

**climax**: where the story reaches a high point of interest or suspense

**falling action**: all the events after the climax that lead to the resolution

**resolution**: the end, or the solving, of the conflict

**denouement**: any events that happen after the resolution*

*(Taken from Prentice Hall Literature, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1989, p.12)*

Not all novels have all these elements within the story. It is possible that the inciting incident has already happened before the opening of the novel, or is an ongoing event throughout the entire novel.

The key element to a story is the **Conflict**, without it there would be no story. There are five basic types:

**Human v.s. God** - a man feels called to be a missionary, but fears the hardships and creates excuses as to why he shouldn't go.

**Human v.s. Nature** - two people are caught in their car in a snowstorm. If they stay in the car, they will probably freeze. If they try and walk to a town, they will probably freeze.

**Human v.s. Society** - a man is accused of murdering his wife. He maintains he is innocent, but the town jury is ready to hang him.
**Human v.s. Self** - Sally needs to pass this test to be accepted at the college of her choice. Her notes are within reach. If she is caught, she will fail; if she doesn't cheat, she will fail.

**Human v.s. Human** - two boys are fist fighting at school over a girl.*


Often times there will be more than one conflict in a novel. But there is usually a central conflict, around which the minor conflicts are focused.

Now think about *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Find the following sections in the book:

**Exposition:**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

**Inciting incident:**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

**Rising Action:**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

**Climax:**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
There were several conflicts in this novel. But there was one central conflict that was prevalent throughout the entire story. What was it, and what type of conflict was it?

List three other minor conflicts that arose due to the central conflict. Tell who was involved, how it was solved, and what type it was:

1. 

2. 

3. 

Falling Action:

Resolution:

Denouement:
Point of View

Rain falls, steadily, for 24 hours. It falls on everyone alike.
To the farmer, it's a joy: his crops are saved.
To the carnival operator, it's a disaster: empty rides and empty sideshows
To the mother, it's an annoyance: children underfoot, interruptions, and noise
To the child planning attend a picnic, it's a heartbreak.
The same rainfall; yet for each person the rain is different because they all see it from a different point of view.*

*(Taken from Writing Creatively, Berbrich, J., New York: Amsco School Publications, 1977, p.400)

Point of view is the perspective from which a story is told. The three most common points of view in narrative literature are first person, omniscient third-person, and limited third-person.

First person: This is where one of the main characters tells the story. We see the events happening through his eyes. We know his thoughts and feelings, but the disadvantage is that we don't know any of the other character's feelings and thoughts except by what they actually say.

Omniscient (or "all knowing") third-person: This is where the narrator is not one of the characters, but knows and tells the events of the story by using all the characters. This way, the feelings and thoughts of several characters are revealed to the reader.

Limited third-person: This is where the events are told from the perspective of just one character, however not the main character. That character's thoughts and feelings are the focus of attention.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, is told from the first person point of view. Cassie is telling the story and her thoughts and feelings are the focus of attention.
The point of view is very important in determining how the story is presented. Let's try an exercise that shows what a major affect the point of view will have on a story.

Here is a situation from the novel, and your job is to write it from three different points of view.

When Little Man was in school for the first day, and he was excited to learn that each student would have his own book this year. His excitement was dimmed when he opened the cover and saw what was pasted there. It said that this book had been used many times already, and only when it was considered to be in "very poor" condition for white students, was is handed down to the black school. Little Man became enraged at the intended insult, and threw his book down and stamped on it, refusing to keep it. His teacher was appalled and proceeded to punish him with a switch.

Tell the story from the first person (Little Man's) point of view:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Now tell the same story from the omniscient third person point of view:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Now try the limited third person (the teacher's) point of view:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
The next two sections take the student "Beyond" the literature by helping the students generalize the concepts discussed and apply them to their own lives. They will critically think about the powerful themes and issues that come from the novel. They will apply their new knowledge by creating a graphic representation of the relevance of the novel as a culminating project to the unit.

Section Six talks about the two themes of prejudice and survival.
Section Seven is the culminating project.
Section Six

Theme I and II: Prejudice and Survival

This section is written so the teacher can choose which emphasis to take with the novel. Each theme is divided into the elements of "into, through, and beyond." Some of the activities overlap and can be used with either theme. It is not designed for all the activities to be used, but so that the teacher can choose which ones would be the most useful and appropriate for his or her students.

The goal of this section is to integrate the language processes of thinking, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as to help the students gain an indepth understanding of the novel and how it applies to their world today. The integration occurs in the discussion questions that can also be used as writing assignments, and all of the related activities integrate the five language processes. Each activity is complete in itself and some have pages that can be copied for the students.

There are several themes that run throughout this novel. The two chosen for this guide are prejudice and survival, however if the teacher chooses to focus on a different theme it would be possible to develop his or her own "into, through, and beyond" activities using the format that is presented in this section.
1. Use a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation as background material for the novel. It is usually printed in its entirety in any encyclopedia. Read and discuss the proclamation. What does it mean? What effect did it have on the lives of the slaves? Did it effect all the slaves? As the novel is being read, remind the students of the freedom granted the slaves by Lincoln.

2. Have students freewrite for 5 minutes on the statement, "I believe (do not believe) that it is possible to live separately and equally." Discuss their answers. With the use of current newspapers or magazines, find examples of this issue in the world today.

3. SPOTS

As an introduction to the concept of discrimination and as a way for the students to feel prejudice first hand, conduct the "Spots" simulation.

Materials: a spotted piece of material long enough to tie around a student's arm

Objective: to teach the students the dehumanizing effect of prejudice, as the perpetrator and as the victim

Procedure: Tell the students that the class is going to be divided into thirds. Two of those thirds will be "non-spots", while the remaining third will receive spotted arm bands, and will be known as the "spots". Being divided into thirds prevents the "spots" from ever representing a majority in the classroom. The teacher should put the groups together in such a way that no group has a real strong support system among themselves and close friends are split up. Using reference material from the 1930s, when segregation was still firmly in place in the deep South, discuss what the blacks could and could not do.

Next, put into effect the following policies in your classroom:
The Spots:
- are not allowed to associate with non-spots
- have to drink from specific drinking fountains
- have to use specific bathroom stalls
- have to sit in designated areas during class and during lunch
- when any materials are passed out, they receive those in the worst condition, or none at all if supplies ran out
- are ignored during class discussions under the premise they don't ever know the answers anyway
- are last to leave after class is dismissed
- have to do book work, while the rest of the class uses manipulatives or other types of hands-on materials

And the teacher may think of other situations that would be appropriate for his classroom.

Most important is that each group has a chance to experience being a "spot". If a student is absent on his day to be a "spot", include him in the next group. This activity also has to be carefully monitored to avoid any abuse of privileges by students who take the simulation too far, and should be restricted to a limited amount of time.

After everyone has had a chance to be a "spot", take time in class to discuss the feelings and emotions felt by all groups. It is very important that the students are able to talk about how this made them feel. Relate this activity to the novel as you introduce the Logan family. Tell the students to watch for specific incidents of prejudice as they read, and tell them to remember what that feels like.
PREJUDICE: THROUGH

1. Have the students complete a Reader's-Writer's Log daily as the students read the book together or at home. The format is as follows:

READER'S WRITER'S LOG

Log Entries: Do a minimum of three entries per week. All entries should include the following information:

Date:
From page ___ to page___.
In Class or At Home:

Your responses in the log should be about what we are reading, or somehow connected to the reading. What you write are your thoughts, reactions, interpretations, questions to what you are reading, what you are writing, and what you are observing in the world around you. Your comments may also be in response to the author's process as a writer, and your process as a reader, writer, and learner.

If you are stuck, think about the following:

Quote or point out: Quote a part of the book that you think shows good writing. Why do you like the quote? What makes you feel this is good writing? Or maybe choose a quote that speaks to you personally. Write it down and explain what it means to you.

Experiences or memories: How does this book make you think or feel? Does the book remind you of anything? What comes to mind? What kinds of ideas does this book give you for writing?

Reactions: Do you love/hate/can't stop reading this book? What makes you feel that way? What reactions do you have to what is happening to the characters in the book? Do you agree with the choices they make? What would you do differently or the same?

Questions: What confuses you? What don't you understand? Why do you think the author did something a particular way? What would you have done if you were the writer?
2. As the novel is being read, have the students pay particular attention to the current media. Have them look for magazine articles, newspaper articles, or news broadcasts where obvious prejudice is taking place. The prejudice does not need to be just for racial reasons. Have the students bring in the articles or summaries from the news broadcasts and share them in class. Set aside a particular corner or bulletin board in the class to display what is brought in. Take time, daily, to discuss these situations and encourage the students to talk about how they feel about these examples of prejudice and if they would handle it differently, or if they would do the same thing.

3. Xerox old newspaper clippings of the 1992 "Rodney King" and "Reginald Denny" stories. The local library often carries past copies of newspapers. Read them together and discuss the possibilities of racial prejudice on both sides.

4. Have the students role play particular scenes from the novel that show obviously prejudice behaviors. First, have them play it the way the book says. Second, have them react as if they were truly involved. Was there a right way and a wrong way to act? What were the consequences of both?
PREJUDICE: BEYOND

1. Have the students videotape a conversation with one or more of the characters of the novel. They will need to write a script and a list of questions to ask the character. They should focus on the particular character as he or she is depicted in the novel. Have a student play that character as he or she might have been in real life. The student may want to question the character about what was NOT said in the novel, and go a bit beyond to predict what might have happened.

2. Take the familiar song "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and play it for the students. Listen to the pain and the pleas for release from their plight as the Negroes sing this spiritual song. In this song, the chariot is the "big dipper". The dipper points to the North star, and the North is where freedom, the promised land, lay. The dipper also appears low in the sky during the winter, when frozen rivers are easy to cross. The band of angels refers to people along the way who organized or helped with the underground railroad. If you get there before I do, means, "If you get away, tell all my friends I'm comin', too."

Now have the students choose a particularly painful scene from the novel, such as the burning of the Berry's, Cassie's humiliation by Lillian Jean, T.J.'s involvement with the Simm's boys, or the burning of the cotton, and have the students rewrite the lyrics, to the same tune of "Swing Low". Tell them to try and evoke particular emotions that would reflect the situation they are describing. Have the students share these songs with the class.

The words to "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" are on the next page.
SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT
Black Spiritual

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home;
Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see?
Comin' for to carry me home;
A band of angels comin' after me,
Comin' for to carry me home.

If you get there before I do,
Comin' for to carry me home,
Tell all my friends I'm comin' too,
Comin' for to carry me home.

I'm sometimes up, I'm sometimes down,
Comin' for to carry me home,
But still my soul feels heav'nly bound,
Comin' for to carry me home.

SURVIVAL INTO

1. This novel takes place in the middle of the depression of the 1930s. Find information on what life was like back then. Following is a list of books that will tell about life during the depression and what people had to do to survive. They may be assigned as independent reading or as a book read aloud to the class.

Blue Roan joins his brother, Monroe, riding the trains from Oklahoma to California to escape the Depression. The boys are attacked by a bum, encounter a Dust Bowl storm, and observe Klansmen injuring a Mexican boy as they struggle to survive.

Irene Hunt. No Promises in the Wind:
Fifteen-year-old Josh Grondowski and his younger brother, Joey, leave Chicago to escape from their overbearing father and their poor living conditions. During their travels, they meet people who treat them kindly, but they also face much hardship. They get separated, and Joey becomes very ill. As they struggle to survive, they learn compassion and tolerance.

Mariam, a ten-year-old Jewish girl, must decide if she wants to leave her family and friends in Brooklyn. Her wealthy Aunt Mili and Uncle Mac want to adopt her and promise her new clothes and educational opportunities.

Milton Meltzer. 1977. Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?
This is an account of the Depression covering the span of time from the roaring twenties to the New Deal. Many quotations from authors, reporters, and others such as social workers are used as well as numerous illustrations.

Ruth Wheeler is disgusted by the living conditions of Annie Scoates, her family’s maid, whose home is in Hooverville. But then her father loses his job, and she has to learn to live without.

A migrant family, the Joads, leave their farm in Oklahoma in search of a better life in California. Initially the Joads are concerned about themselves, but as the story evolves and their economic situation deteriorates, they
become concerned for all people.


Individuals from all strains of life share their impressions of the Depression. Each recollection is preceded by a short biographical note about the person who is speaking.


After her father dies, Seely, her younger brother, Robert, and her mother move to the city where her mom gets a job at a hotel. The youngsters help by doing household chores and working to earn money, but surviving during the Depression produces much stress.

2. Another way to help the students understand the Depression is through personal interviews. The students need to find someone who lived through the Depression and talk with them about this time period of his or her life. To make sure the students cover the basic topics, require them to ask several questions.

What do you remember most vividly about the Depression?

In your opinion, what caused the Depression?

What did President Roosevelt do to solve problems during the Depression? How effective were his programs?

Do you think we could have another Depression?

Some other questions that may bring some interesting answers:

How did the Depression affect your education?

Were you forced to work at an early age?

Did you have contact with vagrants or people who lost their life savings in the stock market?

What did you eat?

What did you do for entertainment?

What kind of toys did you play with?
Who were your sports heroes? What teams did you cheer for?

Have you students brainstorm other questions they may have about life during the Depression.

When interviewing, give the students the option to tape record questions and answers, or to just write them. Teach the students how to follow up on broad answers with questions that will elicit details, examples, and anecdotes.

Next have the students write up the interview, then take this information and write a well-organized essay. Encourage them to use direct and indirect quotations.

The option of writing an interior monologue may be given as opposed to the essay.

Be sure the students share with others what they have found out about life during the Depression.

As the students read the novel, encourage them to find similarities between the person they interviewed and the Logan family. Was life during the Depression the same for everybody? This could also be used as a "through" activity.
SURVIVAL : THROUGH

1. As you read the novel as a class, have the students take notes on any behaviors that the Logans had to adapt into their lives in order to survive living in a prejudice society. For example: because blacks were not hired around town, Papa had to go out of state to find work. Because the blacks were considered "less" than the whites, they received worn materials for school, or none at all. How did Mary deal with these lack of supplies? How did the Logans adapt their attitudes and behaviors to avoid conflict?

2. As an exercise in adaptation, have the students tape one of their thumbs to the palm of that hand, preferably, their dominate hand. Have them spend all period trying to write, trying to pick things up, button or unbutton jackets, and completing simple tasks. Near the end of the period, take time to discuss their frustrations and what they did differently to complete the same tasks. Did they find they needed to support each other more? Were they completely unable to complete certain tasks? How were any of these behaviors similar to what the Logans had to do to survive? Did they also turn to each other for support, or did they try and go it alone?

3. Have the students complete a daily Reader's Writer's Log, but focus on adaptation and survival. (See PREJUDICE : THROUGH, # 1)
SURVIVAL : BEYOND

1. Using music from the era of the novel, have the students explain how specific song lyrics reflect the social and cultural conditions of that era.

Songs of an Era

After reading the novel, have the students think back on what some of the blacks and whites alike had to do to survive. One of their attempts was to start a union of workers to combat the unfair policies of the landowners. This is covered in detail in Mildred Taylor's sequel, Let The Circle Be Unbroken. This activity could also be used as an introduction to the reading of the sequel.

Take a little time to discuss this time period, the unions, and the attempts of the workers to unite, along with the problems they encountered from the opposition, with the students, and even team up with a social studies teacher to coordinate the activity.

Pass out lyrics to "Joe Hill" by Alfred Hayes and Earl Robinson. The lyrics are reprinted on the following page. Joe Hill, a great labor organizer and poet, was executed in 1915 on a murder charge which union circles have always considered a frame-up. This song, written in his memory, is one of the most moving of all the labor songs.

Each student must have a copy of the song, a pencil, and be ready to jot down ideas while they are listening to the song being read, or a recording of the song. Before the reading or listening, tell the students to do the following:

Underline words or phrases that:
* mean the most to you
* carried special conviction
* are important
* strike you as particularly empty or weak
* were repeated for a reason
* rang true
* rang false, hollow, or plastic
* didn't do anything for you

At the end of the song, ask the students to see which words or phrases stuck in their minds. Have them go back and write down things they associated with any of the words or phrases. Give the students time to do this independently. Play or read the song as many times as necessary for the students to make some connections.
Writing Assignment:

Song lyrics are often an expression of the social and cultural conditions of the historical era in which they are written. After closely examining the song given to you, explain how this song is a reflection of the spirit of the unions in the 1930s and 1940s. In your essay, paraphrase the main message of the song and explain how the song reflects the conditions of the union workers. Support what you have to say with references to key words or phrases in the song and by describing specific events, people, issues, etc., of this time period. Your essay should have a clear introduction, main body, and conclusion and provide logical connections and transitions between the key words in the song you mention and the real life events to which you think they refer.

Before the students begin writing, it may help to define "social" and "cultural".
Social - of or relating to human society, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as member of a society.
Cultural - the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts, and depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. The customs, beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious or social group.

Also, have the students answer the following questions for each stanza.
-What are the main points or feelings you got from the stanza?
- Summarize the stanza in a single sentence.
- Choose one word from the stanza that summarizes it.
- Choose one word that isn't from the stanza that summarizes it.

After the students go through a prewrite and writing stage, have them read to their peers for helpful suggestions or more ideas. Then they need to write a final copy.
JOE HILL
words by Alfred Hayes, music by Earl Robinson

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
Alive as you and me.
Says I, "But Joe you're ten years dead",
"I never died," says he.
"I never died," says he.

"In Salt Lake, Joe," says I to him,
Him standing by my bed,
"They framed you on a murder charge,"
Says Joe, "But I ain't dead",
Says Joe, "But I ain't dead".

"The copper bosses killed you, Joe,
They shot you, Joe," says I.
"Takes more than guns to kill a man,"
Says Joe, "I didn't die,"
Says Joe, "I didn't die,"

And standing there as big as life
And smiling with his eyes,
Joe says, "What they forgot to kill
Went on to organize,
Went on to organize."

"Joe Hill ain't dead," he says to me,
"Joe Hill ain't never died.
Where working men are out on strike
Joe Hill is at their side,
Joe Hill is at their side."

"From San Diego up to Maine,
In every mine and mill,
Where workers strike and organize,"
Says he, "You'll find Joe Hill,"
Says he, "You'll find Joe Hill."

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
Alive as you or me.
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead,"
"I never died," says he.
"I never died," says he.

California: Silver Burdett and Ginn, p. 62)
Another possible song for this activity is "Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?" This song focuses more directly on what the depression meant to many people as they had to adjust their lives to deal with the loss of their wealth. This was first sung by Rex Weber in the 1932 musical revue "Americana"; this song became the theme of the American depression in the thirties.

Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?

Once I built a railroad, made it run,
    Made it race against time.
Once I built a railroad, now it's done.
    Brother, can you spare a dime?

Once I built a tower to the sun,
    Brick and rivet and lime.
Once I built a tower, now it's done.
    Brother, can you spare a dime?

Once in khaki suits, gee, we looked swell,
    Full of that Yankee Doodle-de-dum.
Half a million boots went sloggin' thru Hell,
    I was the kid with the drum.
Say don't you remember, they called me Al-
    It was Al all the time
Say, don't you remember, I'm your Pal!
    Buddy, can you spare a dime?

California: Silver Burdett and Ginn, p. 45)
Instead of the traditional approach to the final exam of true/false, multiple choice, and an essay question, this project takes into account the entire novel and the students' ability to pull meaning from the entire experience. It helps the student to integrate their ideas and relate several of the discussed concepts into one representation of the novel as they saw it. It is called a "Graphic Map." The process required to complete the map takes the student through a review of the novel and the elements of character, structure, theme, or style within one work, or they might examine the treatment of a single idea found in several works, perhaps of different genres, from different time periods or by different authors. The students must go beyond the literal interpretation and derive their own meaning and personal message. This map forces the students to look at what they learned, and what they will walk away with at the conclusion of this unit.

There are five steps to the project: 1) Find a focus for the project, 2) Select a unifying symbol, 3) Address possible objections of the students 4) Rereading for quotations, 5) Integrating colors, symbols, and words.

First: Finding a Focus
A literary graphic assignment may be quite specific, or it might be general. The students need to review their own responses to the text by looking at assignments completed during the reading, or reviewing their response logs that may have been used throughout the unit. Clustering and doodling are useful pre-mapping activities. Often through this seemingly aimless doodling, students come to the knowledge of the focus of their graphics. This process may be delayed, as often the focus and meaning will emerge during the process of working with the graphics. The teacher may want to use the worksheet following this section (see pgs. 79-80) to help the students focus their ideas.

Second: Selecting A Unifying Symbol
Once students have settled on their topic, they select a unifying symbol or set of related symbols arising directly from the text, or from their response to it. The students should be encouraged to trust their instincts, remembering that shapes, colors, objects, and words can all be used symbolically. It is possible that the symbol may change, develop, and grow as they proceed through the process. The symbol may come directly from the text, such as a pig's head for a graphic of Lord of the Flies, or metaphorically such as a caged bird to represent Tom Robinson in To Kill a Mockingbird. Examples from Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry may be the color "black" to represent the darkness these people live in, or the song flute that Stacey was given by Jeremy that was never used, to represent the futile attempts by some of the children to bridge the prejudice gap, or the inside cover of the childrens' school books that said "very poor" to represent the perceived status of blacks during this time.

Third: Aside: "But I Can't Draw!
It is at this point, that students often say, "But I can't draw!" The key to a successful graphic is in their growing understanding of the literature, not the artistic quality of their graphic. The primary purpose of this process is to help them think, to organize, and integrate their thoughts. Many students do produce artwork of exceptional quality, while others discover in themselves a powerful mode of expression. It doesn't hurt to spend some time looking at artwork and clustering the connotations of different shapes, colors, or spacial arrangements. Students need to broaden their concept of symbol, and gain confidence in their own symbol-making ability.
Fourth: Rereading For Validating Quotations
As students begin working with the overall shape of their graphics, they need to return to the text for quotations and examples that will validate their ideas. It is not quantity that counts here, but the precision with which the quotes are chosen. Students must relate their graphics to the characters, events, and ideas in the novel. It is usually with a high degree of involvement that they go back through the text.
As the students work, talking and sharing their findings, they discover a variety of ways to incorporate the quotes into their graphics. The textual references should be included on the graphic as well to aide writing assignments that follow. The quotes can also be used artistically to support the visual pattern of the graphics. The students will return regularly to the text as they seek out quotations to support the specific themes of their graphics.

Fifth: Integrating Colors, Symbols, and Words
Advise students to integrate colors, symbols, and words to form a design that is pleasing and logical to them. Spend some time talking about the value of titling their work, as opposed to simply labeling their graphic. The title should pique interest as well as suggest what the map is about.

Sixth: Going Public with the Graphic Map
While the graphic map may stand alone as a final study of a novel, it is important that the students share what they have done with the rest of the class.

Orally
An oral presentation confirms the validity of what the student has done. The student needs to talk about what he or she has created. Other students should be aware of what their classmates are doing. As they explain their graphics, they are verbally putting the parts into a larger perspective. Often students come to a better understanding of what they have done by talking about it.

Written
Also, several writing assignments may be a natural follow up of the graphic as well. The students may simply describe their graphic in an essay form. They could write a poem or lyrics to a song to illustrate their graphic. Writing assignments where the students relate the theme of their graphic to a current situation, or to another novel they have read, are two other possibilities. Or maybe they just need to discuss how this novel affected them, by
writing about their feelings as they produced the graphic. Using the graphic as a spring board eliminates the fear of students that they have nothing to say.*

*(This process was taken from Drawing Your Own Conclusions: Graphic Strategies for Reading, Writing, and Thinking, Claggett, F., and Brown, J., Portsmouth: Heinemann. 1992. pgs.40-42)
OUTLINE OF A GRAPHIC MAP

FINDING A FOCUS

1. What is the main message you think the author is trying to make known?

2. Write this message into one coherent sentence.

SELECTING A UNIFYING SYMBOL

1. Choose one object, color, shape, or word that best represents the main message of the author. Use the sentence you wrote above to help you.

2. What exactly does this object symbolize to you?

3. What other objects, colors, shapes, or words could be used to make the meaning of your main symbol clear?

DRAW

On the back of this paper, sketch in pencil how you would draw a picture of your unifying symbol. Then add the additional symbols to help clarify your meaning.
LOOKING FOR QUOTATIONS

Look back at the writing you have done throughout this unit, and glance through the book. Choose one, or several quotes that clearly illustrate the message on which you are focusing. Be sure to include the speaker and the page number.

INTEGRATING COLORS, SYMBOLS, AND WORDS

Now go back and look at the pencil sketch on the back of your paper. How can you integrate all your ideas, as well as the quotes to say what you mean? Spend some time adding to and shaping your picture, thinking about the colors and shapes you will use in your final graphic. Also think of a title for your graphic. This needs to pique the interest of others, and capture your main idea at the same time.
APPENDIX B

THREE STAGES OF AN EFFECTIVE LITERATURE LESSON OR PROGRAM
The following section further illustrates the use of the Into, Through, and Beyond method used within this project. In the following paragraphs, these same divisions are called Before, During, and After.

Activities for the Three Stages of Study

In designing lessons around major literary works, teachers should include activities suitable for use at three stages of study—before, during, and after the reading. Prereading activities should ignite student curiosity about the upcoming selection and fill in the necessary background (about the author, time period, or any specialized vocabulary). Before starting *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, for example, the teacher might read excerpts from the Newberry Award acceptance speech by Mildred Taylor as she shares the experiences that prompted her to write her highly acclaimed book. Before reading *Crow Boy* by Taro Yashima, students might talk about the experience of coming to a new school. Storytelling is an excellent way for quickening the interest of students in literature, with fine opportunities to enhance their listening skills as well. After such experiences, students can be motivated to read further the works of writers they have encountered in this dramatic fashion.

Activities during reading should be calculated to promote comprehension, cause students to compare responses, and call attention to graceful and effective uses of language. At the elementary level, that means asking basic questions at appropriate intervals in the reading, such as: What sort of person is the main character? How can you tell? What is the biggest problem he or she faces? If you were in his or her shoes, what would you do? These basic questions that promote comprehension sound simple enough, but it is just this sort of inquiry that builds proficiency in reading and yet occurs all too infrequently in elementary school classrooms.

In the later school years, the questions about literature become more searching, and the language skills they evoke become more sophisticated. In *Hamlet*, for instance, the soliloquies serve as a focal point for understanding the melancholy Dane's character. Students can dramatically render the soliloquies in oral readings, giving them a distinct interpretation: madness, naiveté, consuming revenge. The class then discusses which version seems to fit best. In terms of cultivating language awareness, while reading a short story such as "Home Run" by Lorenz Graham, students might list the regional colloquialisms used in the conversation between the farm boy and city folk, and then try substituting standard English. Which version is more colorful and alive?
After a reading assignment, classroom activities should be geared to focus and deepen the students’ responses to the text and open up vistas that encourage long-term interest in literature. As already mentioned, making the connection between a text and real life—in class discussions, writing assignments, panel formats—is a particularly effective way to achieve this result. Original writing may also provide a good outlet for expression. Students enjoy writing imitations or parodies of favorite works (for example, W. H. Auden’s “Unknown Citizen” might be reborn as the “Unknown Eleventh Grader”). In the schoolwide context, any forum to recognize student writing acts as leaven for the entire program (for example, a literary magazine or book reviews published in the school newspaper). Indeed, all students should be given opportunities to engage in writing in various genres and in a variety of modes of discourse. What better way is there to come to a full realization of what constitutes excellence in literary writing? By trying such writing, students begin to understand more fully the artistry of successful authors and poets.

Students should also be made aware of literature as an ongoing adventure to which they have access. For instance, well over 100 readings, poetry films, or dramatic/performance poetry productions are offered in the San Francisco Bay Area each month.

(Taken from California State Department of Education. (1987). Handbook for planning an effective literature program. Sacramento, California: Department of Education. pp 34-35.)
References


